TREASURE STORIES OF EASTERN IDAHO

LOUIS J CLEMENTS

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TREASURE STORIES
OF
EASTERN IDAHO

By

Louis J. Clements

June, 1991

Upper Snake River Valley
Historical Society
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INTRODUCTION

Every spring as the snow begins to melt and the water starts to run a spirit of adventure goes throughout the land. Spring is the time that stirs the hearts of the amateur prospector. Spring means new run off of water that may have stripped new flakes from the exposed veins of quartz that contain gold. The snow also carries soil from the hillsides into the streams moving gold that may have weathered during the winter. This gold is then deposited in the collecting spots behind rocks and on sand bars. It happens every spring with the promise to prospectors each year of shedding the confines of the home (cabin fever) and being able to once again get out into nature.

An excited miner. (Courtesy of Lost Treasure Magazine.)

Those of us who are into the casual or more serious prospecting have noticed over the years that the numbers showing up on the streams with gold pans is increasing. It is not getting into overwhelming numbers yet but there are more people observed each year on the gold producing steams.

I have dedicated a portion of this book to assist and entice some of you into enjoying the outdoors more by becoming an amateur prospector. There is great joy to be found in getting out into the wilds where you can see nature and also have the 'back of the mind' prospect of discovering some gold.

In my many years as a week-end prospector I have panned most of the streams of Eastern Idaho. There is gold in the North Fork of the Snake River, the South Fork of the Snake River, the Teton River, Bitch (North Fork of the Teton) Creek, Falls River, Camas Creek, Warm River, Robison Creek, Buffalo River, Beaver Creek, Burns Creek, Birch Creek, and many other smaller streams. I have not panned every creek or stream of water in the area but I am working on it.

My experience has not yielded wealth in dollars. My exploring nature has been rewarded beyond measure as I have taken the opportunity to see what we have in Eastern Idaho. I have found at the greatest success as many as five flakes of gold in a single pan. Often there is nothing. One flake brings the feeling of success. In the background of my mind is the anticipation of finding the big deposit that will lead to the mother lode. I can see why the prospectors of old were driven to continue their quest of wealth.

My pan accompanies me on picnics, fishing trips, and sight seeing. It only takes a moment to investigate a promising sand bar, a deposit of sand behind a rock, or a sand deposit above the normal water line of a stream. It has proven to be a very satisfying addition to my normal outdoor activities in our fantastic valley.

Gold was discovered in Northern Idaho in 1860 and serious mining began in 1861. As miners rushed into the area the claims soon had all the land taken. Miners felt that if there was gold in Northern Idaho there was probably gold in the surrounding mountains. They began to spread out. There was gold found in the Boise area and in the Salmon country. From Salmon the prospectors spread into Montana and the discoveries at Virginia City, Alder Gulch, and Bannock soon were producing large amounts of gold.

The best way to get the gold out of Montana was to send it down the trail/road to the railroad in Utah. Supplies for the mining areas had to be freighted out of Utah up the road to Montana. This made for a lucrative opportunity for those who preferred to obtain their gold through less laborious means than panning or working in a mine. The wide Snake River Valley offered

a means of escape for any would be outlaw who had designs upon a gold laden coach.

The mines in Salmon and in Custer soon found that it was easier to send their gold to join the travelers on this north/south road. The increase of commerce on the road only increased the number of robberies. Most of the lost treasures of Eastern Idaho are tied to the gold traveling from one of these three mining areas. There was a lot of gold found and it did no one any good until it was deposited in a bank or used to purchase supplies for the up grading of the miners life. It had to be shipped out.

I have been gathering stories for many years regarding the lost mines and buried treasures of the area. There are a lot of them. I have studied the history of other areas of the West and while some of them have more famous stories of lost treasure they do not have anywhere near as many. The Snake River Valley of Idaho has more lost stories than anywhere I have been able to discover. Most of the lost treasures and mines of this area are still lost.

I have often wondered how I would feel if I lost a treasure or the location of a mine. I also have wondered how someone can do this. Obviously, on some occasions, the perpetrators of the robbery were killed by the posse or died of some other means. But several of them came back to the supposed burial spot and could not find where it was. On one occasion a mine is lost and the miner was only absent for over the winter.

I feel that if I worked in the vicinity of a mine for a full summer that I would be able to find the mine the following spring. I especially feel I could not lose it unless there was a natural disaster such as an earthquake that might disturb the land drastically. My skepticism is tempered by the knowledge that we have many modern conveniences today that may assist in the location of a hidden treasure or in the burying of one. Buildings, fence poles, power poles, distant homes, etc., could all assist today in the lining up of landmarks to help in determining where to bury something and in finding it the next year.

For those of you who are interested in beginning prospecting I have divided this book into two parts. The first part contains some basic instruction regarding the panning of gold and the locating of ore bodies. It is basic but the best way to get educated is practice, practice, and practice. You can study a lot of how to do books for background knowledge but it will not replace the school of experience. The other way to gain knowledge is to listen to those who know or profess to know about the subject. You will always gain in this manner.

The second part of the book is devoted to the stories of the buried treasure that are so abundant within a short drive of Rexburg.

One of the by-products of this collection of stories is that it may trigger in your memories the knowledge of rumors or factual stories that you know of. I would hope that you would write them down and send them to the Upper Snake River Valley Historical Society, P. O. Box 244, Rexburg, Idaho 83440. If enough of them come in we could put out a second volume of stories for those who like to look for these treasures. If there are not enough of them we would include them in one of the up coming issues of the Snake River Echoes, the magazine of historical stories of Eastern Idaho.

I have often been asked where I found the information that is found in these gold stories. Over the years I have gathered the stories from newspapers, folk tales handed down, listening to others, journals, diaries, and some books. I had copies of newspaper accounts of many of the early robberies in my files for years. I obtained many of them from the newspapers of Virginia City and other cities of the gold fields of Montana. Some of these came from the library of the Montana Historical Society. They were in my den when my home was hit by the Teton Flood. I lost all of this material as my den was totally trashed. One of the most unpleasant memories of the flood is walking in my den and seeing the vision of all my records and research strewn about and mixed with the mud and water. All I could do was shovel it into a wheel barrow and dump it. At the time it almost ended my interest in history and writing. It is hard to give up, though, when the subject is Eastern Idaho and there is so much history to find and write about.

There is always some wondering if the information about a treasure is accurate or not. By the time it has been passed from person to person it can take on a story of its own which may or may not have any truth left in it.

Also stories told about an area by someone who is not familiar with that country can create discrepancies in the tale.
For example take the following quote from the July, 1990 issue of Lost Treasure regarding a treasure lost in Eastern Idaho. Pay particular attention to the two descriptions of where the gold is buried.

"The following treasure tale concerns a little known bandit named James Lockett, who was a minor outlaw. The story goes that each time he committed a robbery he made sure part of it was buried. Over a period of several years Lockett is supposed to have cached close to $100,000 north of Pond's Resort near Maryville in Fremont County..."

Consider that the treasure is supposed to be north of Pond's Resort near Marysville. Marysville is twenty miles south of Pond's Lodge. I point this out to show that it is possible to make a small error that can change the whole complexion of the tale. The author of the story can not be very accurate about the geography of the valley nor can the editors of the magazine. This is not to be expected of a national magazine or an author who is writing from sources of the story.

It does point out why there are many different stories about the same treasure and why they sometimes are quite different. I should suggest that someone reading the stories I have written or compiled here without reading the qualifiers regarding the stories would go away with a lot more knowledge than ever existed about the original tales.

I would like to thank the Upper Snake River Valley Historical Society for the information yielded by their excellent library. I would also like to thank Shurron Genta for her help in the proof reading of this manuscript.

I hope that you will have as much fun as I have over the years looking for buried treasure and panning for gold. It is enjoyable and might prove to be quite rewarding.

Good Luck,

Louis J. Clements

HOW IS GOLD FOUND?

Most gold is found away from the primary source of the ore. The vein of gold is worked at by rain, snow, and wind with flakes being weathered away. The flakes or dust follow the natural erosion patterns down from the source. The beginning prospector can follow some simple rules to find out first of all if gold does exist and then how to trace it to its vein.

Placer Gold

A great many of the streams in the West and especially in Idaho contain traces of gold. As the gold chips off the primary source the wind and rain usually get it eventually to a stream. Since gold is heavier than the surrounding soils of most streams it sinks to the bottom. Gold is found behind rocks in the stream

Conant Creek is typical of Eastern Idaho Streams that course through known gold bearing soil.

that cause a natural lessening of the force of the water. Sand bars collect the gold that has come down the stream over the years. The continual motion of the water tends to shift the rocks of the stream ever so minutely and the gold sinks further into the loose rock. A successful prospector will continue his search through sand until he has checked it out down to the bedrock.

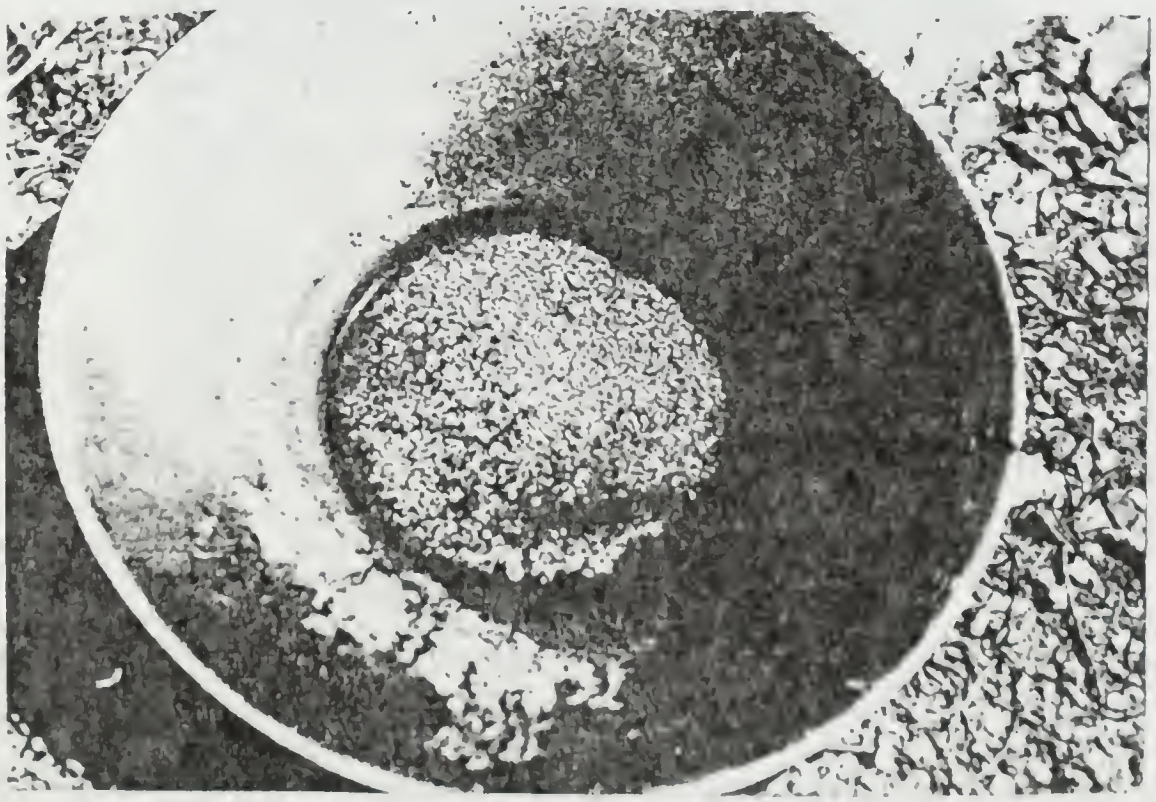
This sandbar on the North Fork of the Snake River has yeilded color on several occasions to the beginning prospector. It is just north of the Hwy 33 bridge.

When I approach a new spot in a stream to see if it has any promise, I look first to see if there are any sand bars present. The next thing I look for are rocks in the stream that have the water swirling around them. The third thing I look for is the presence of black sand in the above places. Black sand is an indicator of the possible presence of gold. It is also the indicator of a problem as it is heavy and makes it hard to separate the gold flakes from the heavy sand.

Check which rocks you discard to make sure they are not nuggets.

A shovel is a very useful tool in prospecting. It will help you get to the bottom of a sand bar much easier.

The downstream end of a sand bar is where I begin panning. I take a sample from the bar and place it in my pan. I usually start with about a half shovel full of sand, mud, or a mixture of both. A gentle circular motion of the pan of water and sand gets the deposit in motion. The direction of the motion is not essential as long as it is constant. At short intervals of time I dip the pan into the stream to get rid of the muddy water. After a short time I pause to remove the larger rocks from the solution. Be careful to look at the larger rocks. Make sure they are not nuggets.



Typical pan of gravel.

I was panning on Burns Creek above Heise Hot Springs on a spring day following the above procedures. I took out a rock about the size of a fifty cent piece, looked at it, and then threw it back into the stream. As I continued panning I kept thinking of the discarded rock and the strange formation it contained. I decided to find it again. It took a half hour of intensive search before I found it. It turned out to be a fossilized part of a horses jaw. Geologists have suggested that it is from one to fifty million years old.

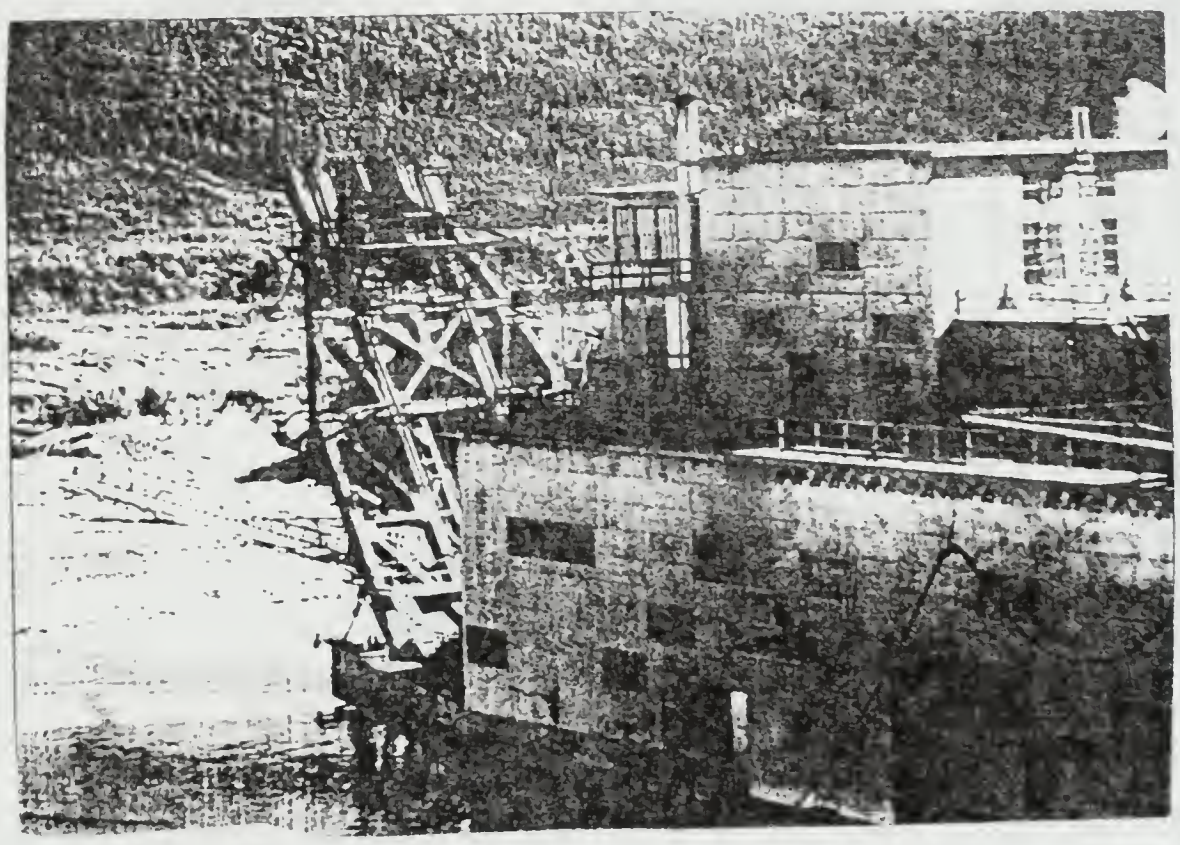
As you continue the motion of the pan and the replacing of the water the sand in your pan will reduce. Then you need to look carefully at the remaining sand as you keep the water in motion. Gold flakes will form at the bottom of the residue in your pan.

A rich deposit would find you with many grains or flakes of gold in a pan. I have always felt excited if as many as three or four flakes showed up in a pan. Before you get too excited about what you have in your pan be sure to look at it again in the shadow of your body. Sometimes in sunlight flakes of something else can look like gold.

Panning for Gold on McCoy Creek near Caribou City

I was panning a stream near Caribou City east of Idaho Falls on one occasion. In the middle of the stream I found a sand bar that looked very promising to me. Adding to the excitement of the prospecting was the knowledge that this stream came right out of the gold producing area of Caribou City that was a gold town of the late 1800's. As I panned I saw many flakes of gold flying past in the pan. The problem was that it was nearing the end of the time that I had that day for exploring. My second pan yielded the same

demonstration of great wealth in gold. I decided to shovel the whole sand bar into a couple of buckets I had with me to take home and pan at my leisure. When I got back to the sand a couple of days later the flakes did not look quite the same. I was panning in my back yard with a hose and on a cloudy day. The flakes looked silvery. It turned out to be muscovite rather than gold. The sunlight and my desire to find a large deposit had given it a different glow in the stream.



These gold dredges did great damage to the streams as they stripped the soil and gravel down to the bedrock and left only piles of rocks.

I have found color in streams all over Eastern Idaho. I have never found it in great enough amounts to make any money from it but whenever I am out in the forest I have my pan with me. All the equipment you need to pan for gold is a pan. A shovel can be useful if you plan to get into the bottom of a sand bar. Boots can be handy if you plan to get out into a stream.

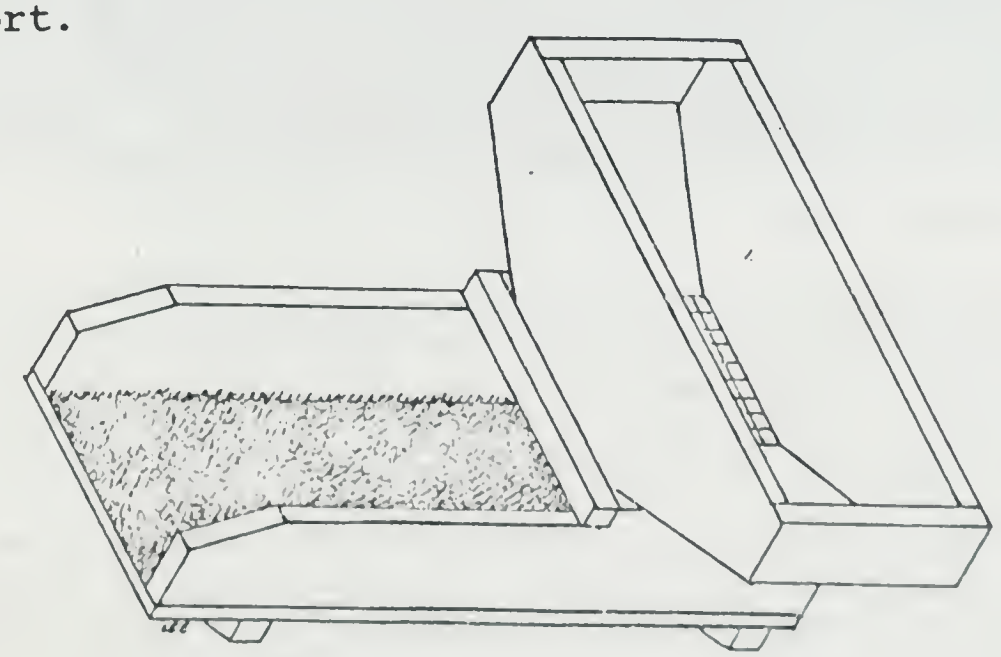
Some, who really get into the week-end or casual prospecting, build themselves mini sluice boxes or rockers. The sluice box of old was built so that sand and gravel could be shoveled into the stream flowing through the box. Small boards in the bottom of the box caused the gold to be deposited behind them. The prospector then shut the stream off and collected the gold. For this method to work it is best to be located in a stream that has been producing gold in some substance by panning. There is too much money that can be invested in a project if there is some question as to whether or not money is to be made.

My friends and I built an eight foot sluice box that could be separated into two parts and reassembled at our chosen stream.

This was when I was in high school. We placed it on various streams throughout Eastern Idaho during the years. It was not long enough to produce anything though the natural flow of water. We never got to the manual labor of throwing dirt or gravel into the box. We also never found any gold. We left the box in a stream over the winter and the spring run-off destroyed it.

Sluice box at Gilmore, Idaho.

Another method of expanding the gold dust recovery process is using the rocker. Many of these models can fit nicely into the trunk of a car. A rocker or cradle uses the idea of a rocking motion to get the gold to settle in the riffles so that it can be recovered. It is considered to be one of the most efficient methods ever developed for separating gold and black sand. Rockers can go through much more sand and gravel than panning with much less effort.



Mini-rocker

Black Sand

One of the biggest problems in Eastern Idaho and a few other parts of the West is the presence of black sand in the streams that also have gold. The black sand is heavy, sometimes being at least twice as heavy as the surrounding sand and gravel, and separating the sand and the gold is sometimes impossible with only a pan. In the past the black sand was considered quite a bother and it was discarded without any consideration that it might be valuable. Today it is considered to be of major value as much gold has been found in the concentrations of the black soil and it can be separated.

The black sand for the most part is not as heavy as the gold. A method used by many of today's prospectors is to let the sand dry on a piece of cardboard, a pan, or something flat. As soon as it is thoroughly dry gently blow across it. A lot of the lighter black sand will fly away. Tapping the board lightly and blowing again will remove more of it.

Gravel bar - North Fork of Snake River

Another method is using a magnet. Most black sand is magnetic as it is from an iron compound. Drawing a magnet through the sand will pick up the black sand and leave the gold. This depends a lot on the consistency of the gold and what kind it is. Some of it, like flour gold, is pretty light and the above methods may lose it.

The most tried and true method of separating the gold from black sand is to use mercury. Mercury will absorb gold from its surroundings. Then the mercury can be boiled and all that will be left when it boils away will be the gold. There are always drawbacks. In this case there are two. Mercury is expensive so you will need to have a system of trapping the vapors of the boiled

mercury so that it can be condensed back into mercury. This would also be wise in the second drawback. Mercury fumes are deadly and cannot be breathed without extensive damage to your system. The trapping program must be foolproof to ensure your continued good health.

Mercury was so popular in the olden days that there is money to be made in recovering deposits of it that were left in the waters of the West. Mercury is very heavy. It is not unknown for a modern prospector to find mercury in the very places he is looking for gold. This would have to be in an area where mining was taking place. There is one story of a deposit of estimated tons of mercury to be found near an old mine in the Salmon, Idaho, country. It was cheap in the old mining days and was just dumped into the streams.

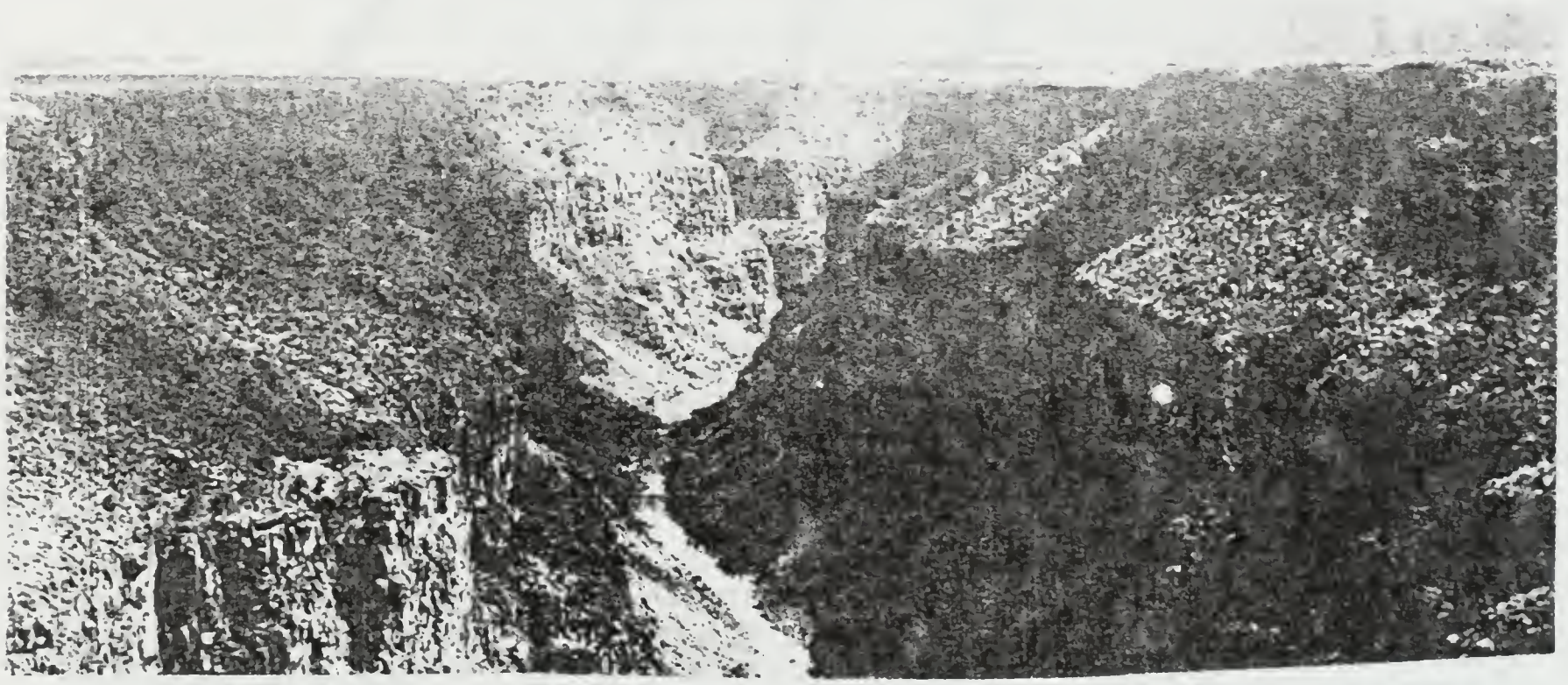
Finding the Motherlode

The old prospectors found their first trace of gold in the streams. They then went up the stream for a distance and panned again. If they found gold again they moved further up the stream. In this manner they were trying to find out where the gold was coming from. Many of the rich mines of California, Nevada, Colorado, and Idaho were found in this manner. Since the source of the gold has to be from an exposed rock containing it this method has proved quite successful.

A shaft cut into the mountain to find the main vein of gold. If it went far enough, rails were needed to carry the ore out.

There has to be exceptions to success and this story illustrates one of them. In some deposits there appears to be many small exposures of gold contributing to the collecting of gold dust downstream from them. At Kilgore, Idaho, there is a collection of

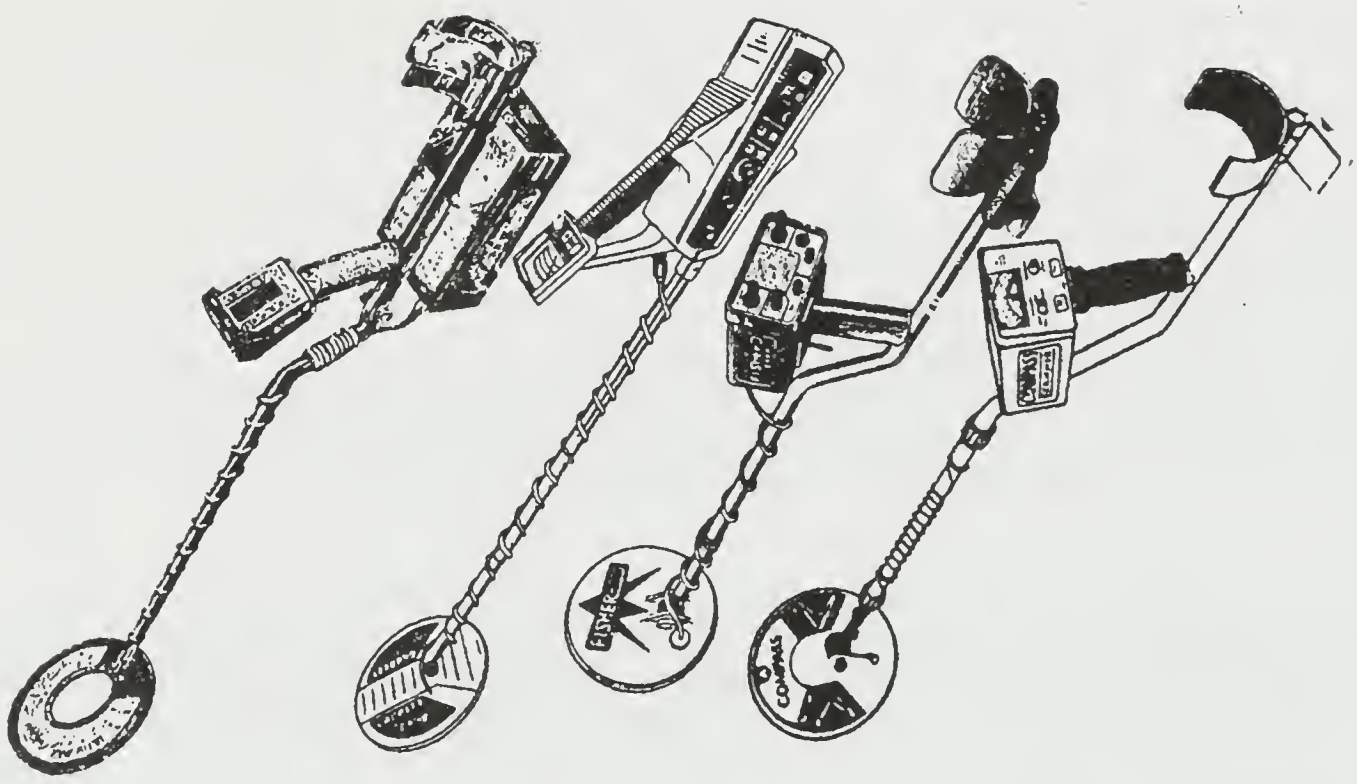
mines that have been dug into the mountainside. I have panned the stream below the mines and found a lot of color. I tried the above method to trace the gold to its source. I followed a small stream right up the mountainside almost to its source. I found gold all along the way. I then went to the sides of the stream and found gold all along the slope of the mountain. It seemed that there were at least three flakes of gold in every pan wherever I panned. The whole hillside contained gold. This would suggest to me that there were many sources of gold wearing away.



Spotting a quartz ledge in a canyon like this would require the use of binoculars. Trying to climb on the sides of this canyon would be impossible.

I heard a new idea a few years ago that seemed to make sense. The prospector was suggesting that if you were in an area that was known to produce gold you should climb to the highest point around and then study the surrounding area. You would be looking for exposed rock that contained veins of quartz. If you used binoculars from the high spot you could see for some distance. Gold occurs in quartz veins and especially in broken areas of quartz. Identifying these areas could shorten the effort of walking all across the country.

Another new innovation in gold panning and prospecting is the use of a metal detector in your search. If you use a plastic, rubber, or non-metallic pan you can make sure that you do not throw away a nugget. You work your pan of sand or gravel to the point you are ready to remove the rocks by hand. Before throwing these rocks away you could pass a metal detector over the pan. It would tell you if there was any gold in any of the rocks that you were contemplating disposing of. I would hate to think that I may have discarded a gold nugget in the past. I will have a metal detector in a short time to augment my search and recreation.



Here are only a few of the dozens of metal detector that are available on the market today. You need to be quite specific as to what you are searching for and where to know which will best fit your needs.

A second use for the metal detector is the search for coins and artifacts of a metallic base. There are many association and clubs that have been organized for amatuer and professional users of metal detectors. There are also contests in different areas of the country where those of the prospecting persuasion gather to see who can use a detector to the best skill to uncover a buried treasure.

There are a lot of magazines, books, video tapes, cassette tapes, and other sources for information regarding the use of and the purchase of metal detectors. It is such a field now that there are dozens of different detectors and it would be wise to have someone help you in the purchase of the one that will best suit the purpose you want it for.

The following list of books are available in the library of the Upper Snake River Valley Historical Society, 51 N. Center, Rexburg, Idaho, to assist someone in their efforts to get into the treasure hunting field.

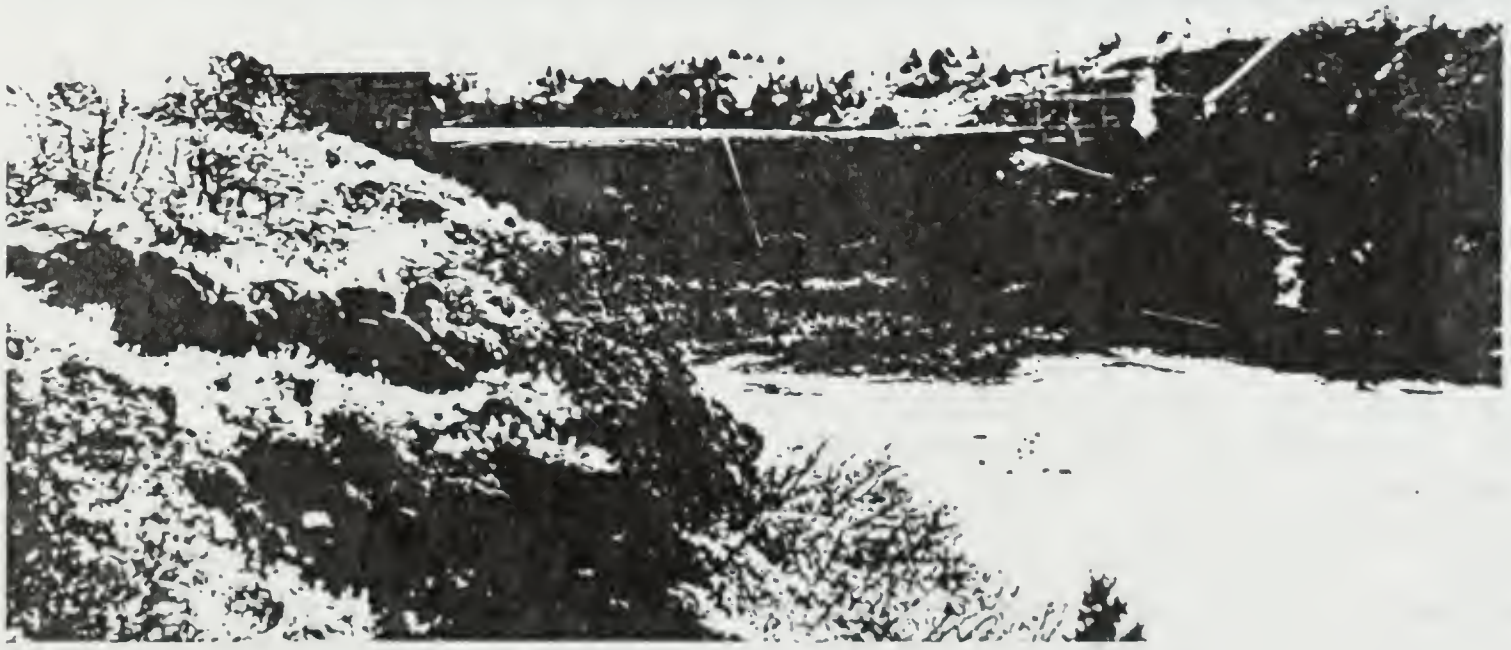
Treasure Hunting Pays Off
How And Where To Prospect For Gold
Treasure Hunter's Manual # 7 and 8
Successful Coin Hunting
The Travels Of Hardrock Hendricks

The material in them can be quite useful in getting you started and helping you to avoid some of the pitfalls of those trying to get their treasure from seeking a potential treasure hunting customer.

The two main areas of gold mining in Eastern Idaho are at Caribou City on Caribou Mountain southeast of Palisades Lake and at Kilgore, Idaho. These are two extremes in success. Caribou City was a modern gold rush town during its heyday. Thousands of people flocked to the area to take part in the possible riches. Kilgore never developed into gold rush. There were many mines dug into the mountain and some gold was found. The main vein of the Kilgore gold was never discovered and so the mines became to expensive to operate.

There were a few other spots of reported gold discoveries in Eastern Idaho but none of them were developed into producing mines. One of the biggest producing areas of gold in the state of Idaho was in the Salmon country. It is only a few hours drive from Rexburg.

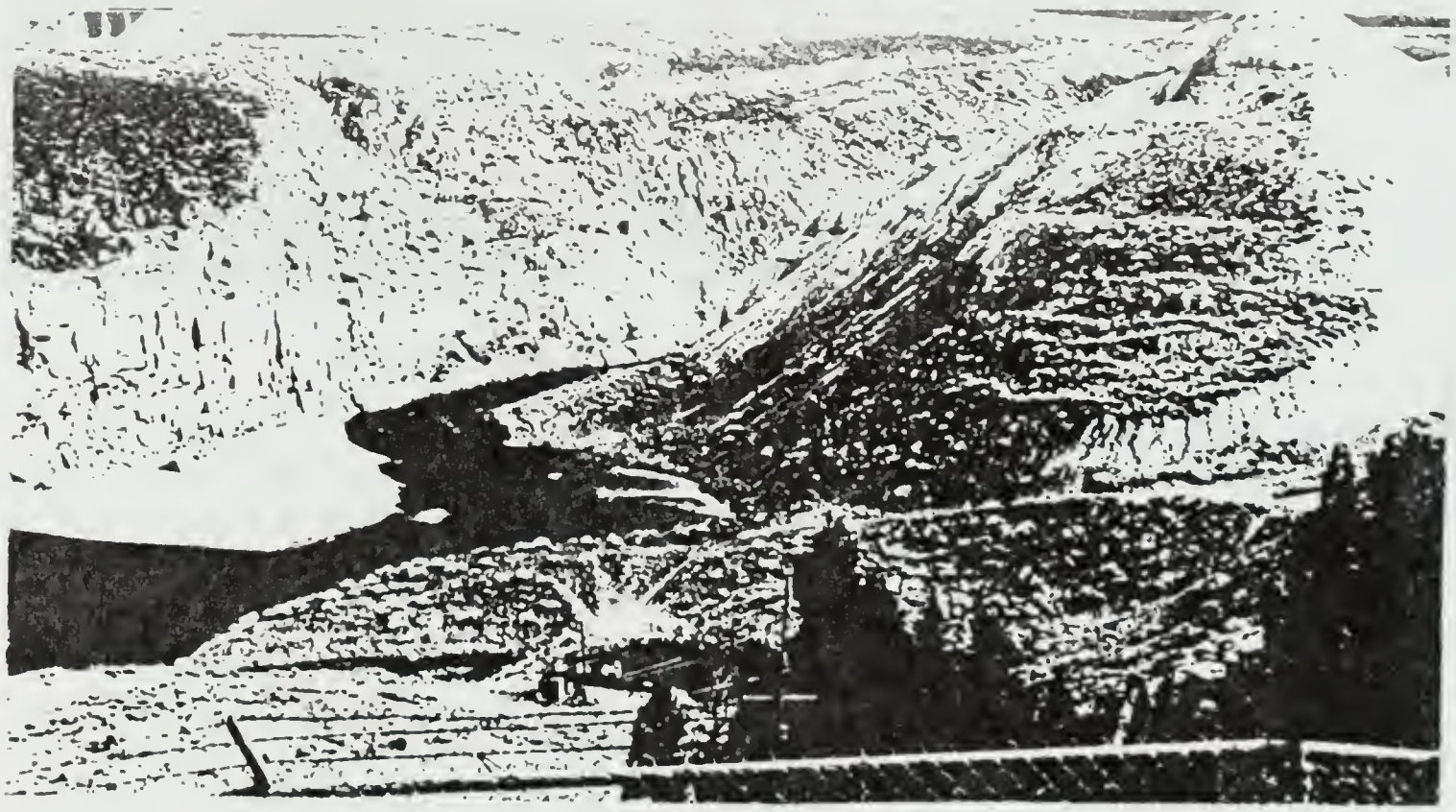
The closest of these mines is in the Gilmore, Idaho, area. Gilmore is a ghost town now as the mines played out in the Depression years. It is only a two hour drive from Rexburg to this town and the mines located nearby. Caution has to be used in exploring the mines as some of them are being actively worked for their silver and most of the area around the workings has also been already claimed. These mines produced silver, lead, nickel, and gold. It is a popular historic site because it is only a mile or so off the main highway and the road into the area is kept up well because it leads to a popular camping spot in the mountains behind the town.



Ashton Dam placed across the Snake River

Detriments to Placer Gold

The biggest detriment to placer gold finding its way down the rivers now are the dams and checks that have been placed across the rivers in an attempt to make more water available for irrigation. This stops the free flow of the [illegible] provides a place for the gold dust or sand to stop. [illegible] that any new gold has found its way down the river that have such checks in place. However, since the gold has taken years and years to find its way down the river the years of irrigation would not make much difference in the gold to be found downstream. New gold would collect in the upper confluence of the reservoir formed by the dam.



Failed Teton Dam

The Teton Dam failure provided a special circumstance to ruin the rest of the canyon for any gold opportunities. There has always been gold in this canyon. It has come from the mountains to the east.

When the dam failed and the water rushed out of the reservoir it caused tremendous damage to the canyon upstream as well as downstream. Water had seeped into the canyon walls upstream. As the water left the reservoir quickly the water in the crevices, cracks, and caves could not drain as quickly. The weight of the water caused the canyon walls to burst to the canyon floor. This changed the free flowing stream to a series of ponds with a cascade of water joining them. It would be hard to imagine any gold grains or dust making their way past these ponds. Even in periods of high water run off in the spring would any gold be able to make its way past the rock checks that now proliferate the canyon.

Downstream view from the Teton Dam

The debris of the dam itself is distributed all over the canyon from the dam downstream through the valley. It will take many more years before the river cuts through all of the rocks and soil to find the original gold bearing sand bars. Some of this "dam" soil found its way clear to the American Falls reservoir.

GOLD MINING IN IDAHO

The gold mining era in Idaho began in 1860 in Northern Idaho. The gold rush to California and the silver discoveries in Nevada had brought many men to the West. As the land for claims was taken up, many looked to other areas for the promise of quick riches. Whenever there was a new discovery there were plenty of unemployed men already out here to make up a rush. Each gold rush also brought new men and women from the East. California went from a few thousands to numbering in the tens of thousands in one year. Most of the other rushes in the West were not so dramatic but they did alter the local populations quite a bit.

Idaho's history prior to the 1860's was characterized by fur traders, trappers, Indians, explorers, travelers along the Oregon Trail, and the incidents connected to their activities. It was an area to exploit and leave, an area to get through quickly on the way to a more desirous location. The Indian menace was enough to discourage ranchers or settlers from moving into the territory. The following areas of gold discovery in Idaho are described here to give you a general knowledge of where the gold discoveries were in the state. Since most of this gold is of a placer type it also suggests that some investigation might lead one to surmise where the gold came from.

Northern Idaho

It would take a story promising immense wealth to convince anyone to venture into northern Idaho in the 1860's. Such a story came froth in 1859. Indians told of seeing the "Eye of Manitou" while camping in the mountains of Idaho on one of their hunting forays. Their fires that night had cast a light upon a cliff to reveal a bright reflection from the rock. The Indians thought it was an eye gazing upon them. They went up the next morning to the source of the light and found a solid rock that resembled glass. White men hearing the story interpreted it to suggest that the glass rock was actually a huge diamond embedded in the rock wall overhanging the Indian camp.

A group decided to investigate. They were at Fort Walla Walla in Washington when they heard the story. They were disenchanted miners from the mines further south and had some time on their hands. Outfitting themselves for a thorough investigation they left for Idaho.

They were almost a hundred miles from the present Washington border well into Idaho when one of the men discovered color in a

stream bed. Immediately they set up a camp and began to vigorously test the stream for more gold. The results were very encouraging as gold was found in almost every pan.

The group spent the entire summer working the sand bars and gravel beds, building up a sizable poke. As winter approached plans were made to send some men back to get supplies while the rest remained to work through the season.

Heavy storms kept the supply group in Walla Walla all winter. The only amusement there was drinking. They were supposed to keep the source of their income a secret. Several evenings of merriment soon had the secret of the gold discovery quite public. In the spring as the supply group returned to their diggings they were accompanied by several hundred enthusiastic followers.

The general area of this gold discovery was named "Oro Fino" meaning fine gold in Spanish.

Major Idaho Gold Discoveries 1860-1880

Salmon River

A lack of unclaimed land in the northern Idaho placer operations forced a group of twenty-three men to move south and eastward looking for gold. They soon found themselves in the mountainous Salmon country. A small discovery of gold there precipitated a minor rush. With more men looking for the best discovery there were soon some rich finds. Several mines were developed and men were employed. This brought many others into the country to spread out on the rest of the mountain slopes.

Perhaps the most interesting part of this mining area was the establishment of Leesburg in western Lemhi County. It was named by men who wanted to honor the South's famous General Lee of the Civil War. Only a mile away were men who were sympathetic to the north. They built their own town and called it Grantsville after the North's most famous general. In Idaho the South prevailed with Leesburg absorbing Grantsville although they both lost out in the end. There are only a few cabins and other remnants of the two towns still standing. There was a lot of gold taken out of this area and a persistent prospector today can find sign of gold in the streams with his trusty pan.

The other major gold discovery in the Salmon River country was on Loon Creek on the Middle Fork of the Salmon. There over a half a million dollars in placer gold was taken out. There is considerable interest still being shown in this area today. The latest discovery I heard of was the deposits of mercury found in the stream. Mercury was used abundantly to separate the gold from any other sand and soil in this stream.

Boise Basin

Curiosity killed the cat but sometimes it brings rewards. For several days an Indian was observed watching the miners of northern Idaho working the streams and slopes. At the end of a hard day's work of digging in the rock and gravel the prospectors were exhausted. The Indian watching them appeared to be amused. When he was approached to see why he watched and asked what was amusing. He told his questioners that where he came from there was yellow rock lying all over the ground. His questioners then casually inquired as to where the Indian had come from. He revealed that he came from southern Idaho just north of the Snake River near present day Boise.

In 1862 Moses Splawn, George Grimes, and a few others set out to explore and prospect. Splawn had been one of the questioners of the above Indian. At one of there camps in southern Idaho they found that a pan of dirt would yield fifteen cents in gold. That would be over a dollar in today's (1991) prices. This was the first gold discovery in what came to be called the Boise Basin diggings. From their camp on Grimes Creek the group spread out and found several rich lodes.

The inevitable rush occurred with thousands of people showing up. Boise City became established as a supplying center. Within two years there were over fifteen thousand people in Boise and it grew to become the capital.

Eventually several hundred million dollars of gold were taken out of the Basin. It has been suggested that more placer gold came out of the Boise Basin area than all of Alaska.

Owyhee County

The background for the rush to Owyhee County started with travelers on the Oregon Trail with a lost treasure. Each of the wagons traveling on the trail was equipped with some blue buckets. They seemed to be part of the standard equipment for traveling across the country. At some spot along the trail in the southwestern part of Idaho their stock began to be very frisky. Fearful of overturning a wagon or having a team run away with one, they filled their buckets with rocks they found near the trail. This was to cause extra weight for the teams to pull to keep them tired and not so frisky. When they got to Oregon they dumped the rocks.

Someone later noticed that the rocks looked different and examined them. The rocks contained gold. It could be explained that new people to the West who had just come from the East would not be expected to recognize gold bearing rock. With so many prospectors scattered across the West it was only a matter of time until someone examined the pile and found what they contained.

The lost gold was called the Blue Bucket Mine. The rumor began immediately that there was a potential gold mining area in southern Idaho. With so much gold being found around the whole country it was easy to believe. Many made their plans to check out this discovery as all gold rumors were checked out. Getting into this part of Idaho was not easy. Having the knowledge that the discovery was made on the Oregon Trail did help in pinning down the location.

The first prospector to lead a group was named Turner. He led his group from the Boise Basin, where they had unsuccessfully been prospecting, across the Snake River to explore the Owyhee Mountains. They did find a little gold but that small amount did not create interest in any others trying their luck. It seems that unless there is a major gold discovery the main body of prospectors that were hanging around were not interested in moving.

The next year twenty-nine men, under the leadership of Michael Jordan, found gold and started a placer operation. They claimed all of the potential gold land and then they went back for supplies to keep them operating for several months. The story got out while they were obtaining their supplies. Perhaps this is because they paid for their supplies in gold, a sure sign that they were experiencing success.

The usual rush followed. Two thousand men quickly went from the Boise area south. They found all of the obvious land claimed and decided to return to their former claims. This gold rush became known in Idaho history as the forty-eight hour rush. Most gold rushes lasted much longer as prospectors were known to look around more. Perhaps the environment and weather conditions of southwestern Idaho did not lend itself to encouragement of a prolonged stay.

They should not have left so soon. Rich silver ores were discovered in the same vicinity. Silver City came into being and millions of dollars were invested in mining equipment and supplies. Soon the mines were producing high amounts of silver. This silver boom continued until the silver crash of the 70's. This area never rivaled the silver mines of Comstock Lode of Nevada but it was impressive for Idaho standards.

Caribou City

Several million dollars worth of gold was taken out of eastern Idaho in the 1870's. "Caribou" Jack Fairchild and his partners discovered placer gold on the mountain which bears his name today. This discovery helps my theory on gold in Idaho. This area is between the gold producing areas of central Idaho and the Wyoming mining. Perhaps that is why Fairchild and his group were prospecting the country. It is quite a way from the established areas of normal gold production.

Two towns grew out of the discovery: Caribou City and Keenan City. The claims played out and the towns died leaving only an occasional prospector looking for the main vein. It has not been found yet. There is a lot of color in the streams coming off Caribou Mountain and the original miners never felt that the main vein of gold which supplied the placer operations on its slopes was found. This is one of the prime sources of amateur panning in Eastern Idaho. There is gold in most of the streams around this mountain just south of the east end of Palisades Lake.

LOST MINES AND BURIED TREASURES

Kelly's Canyon

Probably the most popular lost treasure in the whole of Eastern Idaho at least in terms of numbers of people who know of it and have tried to find it is the Kelly's Canyon gold. It is just off an oiled road leading to a popular ski lodge and is very easy to get to. I have sent groups of students each year to the canyon to try their luck at finding this buried treasure.

The gold lost in Kelly's Canyon originated in Virginia City, Montana. When gold was discovered in the Alder Gulch in 1861, the nearest railroad for transporting the gold to banks and supplies back for the mines was in Utah. A well traveled road developed between Utah and Montana through Idaho. Interstate 15 follows this early road fairly close today. Stagecoaches, freight wagons, and mule trains made their way northward loaded with supplies and people and returned southward with gold and people. The southward journey was frequently interrupted by outlaws in their attempts to by-pass hard work in obtaining their gold.

One of the more popular areas for the robberies was in the Portneuf Canyon south of Pocatello. Here, near McCammon, occurred one of the more unique robbery episodes which resulted in this, the most noted of the lost treasure stories in Eastern Idaho.

Bill James and his partner, Jim Hall, were hidden behind a large boulder in the Portneuf Canyon. Several times they had heard the wheels and plodding horses of a freighter coming down the road but they were waiting for the more measured trotting of the stagecoach horses. They knew that the stages often carried gold as well as wealthy mine owners and they had determined to relieve the passengers and the stage of any gold or currency.

They had picked their site because it was at the top of a small rise. Soon the stagecoach appeared coming over the hill with its horses laboring. The stage stopped to allow the horses a breather. At this point James stepped into the road and Hall let himself be seen behind the boulder with his rifle pointed at the stage. Both of the men wore masks.

They demanded the strongbox to be thrown down. They also made the passengers leave the stage so they could be searched for personal items of value. The horses were cut from the stage and hasty bow [illegible] to prevent a quick reporting of the robbery. The two outlaws then loaded the gold onto two mules and went north [illegible] to make their leisure way northward [illegible] into Wyoming.

This is the view just past Kelley's Canyon looking toward the east. Just past the farm house in the distance the river and the road turn to the north.

Shortly after the two outlaws disappeared a freighter showed up from the south. The stage drive persuaded the freighter to cut out one of his horses so that he could go back to Blackfoot to report the robbery and to obtain new horses for the stage. By the time the stage driver got to Blackfoot it was getting dark and so a posse was organized to leave at first light. The two outlaws had been observed crossing the Snake River to the north of town and it was felt that they would not get to far during the night.

Early the next morning the posse set out for Eagle Rock (Idaho Falls) to see if their quarry had been seen there. Their inquiries found that two men with mules fitting the outlaws description were about two hours ahead of them and headed in an easterly direction towards where the South Fork of the Snake River enters the plain.

James and Hall were soon spotted as the posse had nothing to slow them down. They were on the north side of the Snake River near the present Heise bridge. The outlaws saw the posse at the same time and whipped the mules to their top speed. The mules were to be the undoing of this pair. They could not out distance the horses even if they were not loaded with gold.

The trail and the road on the north side of the Snake River end as the river runs against the steep side of the mountains just beyond the hill in the middle of the picture.

James had the line that was leading the mules and Hall decided to make it every man for himself. He left James on the flat just east of Heise and struck out on his own. Near the mouth of Kelly's Canyon the two disappeared from their pursuers as a heavy (cloudburst) rain shower obscured them from view. The posse rode through the shower and spotted a rider disappearing around the bend of the river. They gave hot pursuit.

The Snake River Canyon past this bend begins to narrow and eventually the north side ends in a solid rock wall. At this point Hall decided to take a stand. It was an unwise decision and in the ensuing shootout, Hall was killed.

The posse was puzzled for a time as they knew there were two outlaws and some mules involved. They retraced their steps looking for a hiding place that James might have turned into. They decided they would have noticed anyone turning into any opening past the turn of the river. They moved quickly back to the flat east of Heise and discovered Kelly's Canyon branching to the north.

They moved cautiously up the canyon for a few miles where they discovered the two mules and a saddle horse feeding quietly. Since it had just rained they felt they would be able to find the outlaws tracks easily. They studied the ground and could find no sign. They then decided that the rain had obliterated any tracks. They searched the rest of the day and then made camp for the night. They resumed their search the next day and then decided that he had

escaped. There just was no trace found of James or the gold. The posse returned to Blackfoot with only the horse and the mules to show for their efforts.

This is the mouth of Little Kelley's Canyon. The shot was taken from the road going up Kelley's. The gold is most likely within the view of this picture.

James had turned into the canyon in the middle of the storm. He had not gone far before he decided to try to hide the loot. He knew the posse might be delayed for a short time by the rain but he also knew that with the amount of gold involved they would shortly be with him.

At the mouth of a small canyon that branched onto Kelly's Canyon from the left, he stopped his horse and the two mules. He did not know how much time he had before the posse would arrive so he did most of the hiding of the gold in great haste. He dragged the packs to a nearby pile of rocks and covered them. He then chased the mules and the horse up the canyon. He got them moving at a steady pace before he decided to try to find a place to hide himself.

He was feeling quite proud of himself as the gold was hidden and the transport was far away from him. All he had to do now was to find a place to get out of the rain and wait. A little way up the canyon (Little Kelly's) he spied a cave through the trees. He had to climb up a rock slope and then lift himself up to the opening which came to his waist. Once inside the cave he felt secure. He could see through the trees where the gold was hidden but it would only be by chance that anyone saw this cave. He settled down to wait, shivering in the cold, soaked to the skin, but feeling satisfied.

This is the cave as seen through the trees. There is a path leading to the cave.

The click of a shoe against stone brought him to his feet to peer out of the cave. It was a few minutes before the posse came into view and then it was through the leaves. The outlaw had a momentary panic as he wondered if he had left any sign on the trail that would suggest that he had stopped. The posse did not slow down and it was evident from their conversation that they were tired of the pursuit and wanted to get back to Blackfoot. He watched them slowly move up the canyon and disappear from view. One of them glanced his way and he shrank back from the cave opening. He was not seen and the posse made its meticulous way searching for signs.

James huddled throughout the night in the cave fearing discovery. He did not dare leave. The next day he studied the canyon and then decided that he was alone. He climbed out of the cave and made his way down to where the gold was buried. He knew that without horses or mules he was not going to be able to move it. He looked around for a better burial spot as he had covered the gold in haste the day before. It took about an hour to uncover the gold, move it to a more secure place, bury it again, and then take note of the landmarks to ensure that he would then be able to find it in a year or so.

Now it was time to leave. He was not to sure of the country around him but to his knowledge the only town anywhere nearby was Blackfoot. He definitely was not going back there. He looked up Kelly's Canyon. It rose dramatically and it was obvious that going

This is the view of Kelley's Canyon from the bottom of the path leading to the cave. This is where the outlaw said he could see where he buried the gold.

that way would take him into the higher mountains. He looked down the canyon and wondered if the posse had left a couple of men around a corner to see if he would emerge. He looked up Little Kelly's and knew that it went towards the west tapering to the north.

We do not know which way he went out of Little Kelly's but we do know that his goal was to get to civilization and to lay low for a period of time. I like to think that he went up Little Kelly's, crossed the Rexburg Bench to the west, and then joined the north-south road in the middle of the desert. It is quite possible that he could have found several freighters in the town of Market Lake (Roberts.) There he could have paid a freighter to take him to Virginia City. He still had some cash that he had taken from the stage passengers.

From Virginia City we know that he made his way to the state of Washington. He wanted to place as much distance between himself and his pursuers as possible and yet still be not too far from his treasure.

In Washington he finally began to relax and quit looking over his shoulder. He arranged for room and board and began to contemplate his future. He also needed time to rest from his

nervous exhaustion and to recuperate from the steadily worsening cold he was developing.

His cold progressed over the days into severe lung problems. His landlady fussed over him constantly and finally called a doctor. The doctor could not arrest the illness and felt that James was steadily deteriorating. The landlady spent several hours a day taking care of him and tried to supply for his every need. It is felt that the rain and exposure in Kelly's Canyon and the subsequent escape had done him in.

Finally James called her in and told her that he felt sure that he was going to die. She had taken such good care of him that he wanted to share his wealth with her. She sent for the doctor and then sat by his bed to listen in fascination as he related his story in a sort of death-bed confession. He told her of several landmarks that would pinpoint the location of the treasure. As he was about to tell here how to line up the landmarks to lead right to the treasure, the doctor arrived.

He took one look at the ailing outlaw and asked the landlady to depart. Shortly afterward the doctor came out and announced that James had passed away.

James' landlady was not sure whether to believe the story or not. It was now several months since the robbery had taken place. She inquired of the local press and discovered that a robbery had taken place in Idaho in the vicinity described by James. She also noted that the loot from the robbery had not been found. Travel from Washington to Eastern Idaho was not a small chore in the 1860's and 1870's. She promptly put the story out of her mind to attend to more serious matters.

Several years later her fortunes took a turn for the worse. She needed some cash to make repairs on her boarding home and for other purposes. The story of the lost treasure kept coming back into her mind. Finally she made the decision to investigate. She put together a small stake and accompanied by a few friends, set out for Idaho.

The Idaho she came to now had several settlements. There was a small resort as the site of the hot springs being operated by Richard Heise, who had homesteaded the area in 1894. This resort made a great cover for the treasure hunt. They could appear to be riding or hiking from the resort while they hunted for the gold. Since there were occasional people around they had to be quite cautious in what they said and did. Several thought the daily trips into the canyons around Heise by the group from Washington suggested they were on a big game hunt.

The area described by James as the burial place for the gold was easily identifiable. His former landlady went right to Kelly's Canyon. She led the group up the canyon and turned into Little Kelly's Canyon. They spread out and quickly found the landmarks that told them they were in the right spot. She went to the left

canyon wall and soon found the cave right where James had said it would be.

[illegible] with the [illegible] quite a few [illegible] the group felt that [illegible] and [illegible] four [illegible] spent several weeks in the area and found nothing to indicate that they were even close. The only encouraging thing was that the landmarks were in existence right where James had described them. They went back to Washington quite disappointed but determined to return the next summer for another look.

Close up of Cave

The landlady returned several summers to the Kelly's Canyon area. Her success was the same each year. In frustration she blew up several cottonwood trees which had been mentioned as landmarks by James. After a few summers she was never seen in the vicinity again. The story of what she was looking for did come out. Perhaps her frustration with the labor and no discoveries caused her to talk. Bit-by-bit the story came out and the landmarks were discussed.

Listed below are the landmarks which the landlady obtained from James and which she used in her efforts to find the treasure.

1. Large rock balanced on a larger base.
2. The creek crosses the old worn trail.
3. Near by stood a lone cottonwood tree.

4. Beyond that a small canyon branches with cottonwood tree in the center.
5. At the (Left blank. Possibly meant base.) of the cottonwood tree in the slope of the smaller canyon is a hole in a small (Left blank. Possibly meant cave.) just small enough to crawl in.
6. I could see the junction of the two canyons, the two cottonwoods, the old trail where it crosses the creek, and up the entire slope of the draw looking east.
7. The treasure will be found at the two imaginary lines drawn from the four landmarks.

It is estimated that the original theft came to fifty thousand dollars in gold plus whatever the passengers were carrying. Assuming James and Hall split the cash and incidentals, the treasure would still be intact. Fifty thousand dollars at fifteen dollars an ounce, as the price was in the days of the robbery, would suggest the gold weighed about two hundred and seventy pounds. This is using twelve troy ounces to the pound. Under today's (April, 1991) prices of about three hundred and sixty dollars per ounce, the treasure would have increased from the fifty thousand to about one million, two hundred thousand dollars. Sounds like enough to cause one to want to look for it.

If you can get yourself into the Heise Hot Springs area east of Ririe, Idaho, getting to the treasure site is easy. You drive past Heise until you come to a split in the road. Take the left hand, paved fork and continue up the road.

Today there is an oiled road going up Kelly's Canyon with a ski resort just a few miles up from the mouth of the canyon. There is a stream flowing on the right side of the road for most of the canyon. As you drive up the canyon watch on the right side of the road for the rock formation described above. Not too far up the canyon you can see a large rock balanced on a smaller base. The large rock almost resembles an ice cream cone balanced the way that it is. This rock suggests that you are in the vicinity of the lost treasure.

Just past the rock a smaller canyon branches to the left. This is called Little Kelly's Canyon. There is a large grassy area at the mouth of this smaller canyon with a little stream flowing down through the middle of it. The grassy area has been used for picnics and the parking of vehicles.

There is a grove of trees on the southwest side of the stream. There is also a cliff on the left side of the canyon and a lesser sloped rise on the right. Straight ahead the canyon narrows and then it opens up again. Walk to the large canyon wall that appears in front and to the right forming the narrow opening. Cross to the left and jump across the stream. You will be in the grove of trees. If you look to the left and up, you will discover a small cave in the wall of rock on the left canyon wall. Don't go beyond the narrow part of the canyon.

The north slope of Little Kelley's, under the shale is where I think the gold is probably buried.

Climb up the trail leading to the cave. James says that he could see where he buried the gold from where he was inside of the cave. You can climb into the cave or just stand near the front of it and see what can be observed. There is not a large amount of land in your vision.

Looking from the cave entrance enables you to see the many landmarks mentioned and supposedly the spot where the gold was covered up. You can see where the trail probably went. You can see where the creek probably crossed the trail although it may have wandered from spot to spot over the years. There are several cottonwood trees around the area. The small canyon is obvious. It is easy to see the description given on the number six of the list of landmarks. All one has to do is decide how to draw the lines right that will mark the site of the treasure.

Put yourself in James' position and you can almost imagine his efforts in trying to hide the gold. I have often wondered if he had the foresight to bring a shovel along. I think not. I feel the gold may be located under rocks on the right side of the canyon.

Many have searched for this treasure in vain. Rumors suggest that it may have been found years ago, but I doubt this as it would be extremely hard to keep such a find secret for this long of a time. It does create a good story. I took a group of cub scouts and their parents to the canyon to tell them of the story as part of their outing. The young kids got so excited to be in the

vicinity of a buried treasure. One of their parents had a metal detector and found a spot where it registered metal. The kids immediately began tearing at the ground with their bare hands. They came up with a few buried cans. They did this same thing several times until they realized that this was a popular picnic area.

It seems likely to me that the gold will remain in its hiding spot until someone comes along to make the right assumption as to how the landmarks are to be used. One day someone will stumble over the right rock pile and uncover a piece of leather or some other clue leading to the treasure.

Mud Lake Treasure

Interstate 15 from Montana to Utah is almost the same road as the historic trail that led from the Virginia City gold mines to the railroad in Ogden. Gold often traveled south on this road while supplies for the mines came north. Since there were many gold coaches traveling the road it became a prime target for those who wished to obtain their treasure in a less strenuous way than with pan or pick.

The early days of the gold discoveries of Idaho in 1861 to Montana in 1862 brought many travelers through Eastern Idaho. The early 60's saw many gold laden wagons, stagecoaches, and mules traveling down the road. At first much of the gold was shipped in the original dust but that became too easy for the outlaws. Then the ore was melted into bars which were too heavy to be transported easily by an outlaw. This was to keep it from becoming too easy a target.

In 1864 a trio of outlaws of the Henry Plummer gang from Montana decided to rob a stage. They had scouted well and knew that the Jefferson County was quite isolated. They stopped the stage and relieved it of the express box full of gold. There is quite a controversy which will probably never be solved as to how much gold was really in the box. Some feel it was only a few pounds while others feel that it may have been as high as seven hundred pounds. The general figure that is tossed around the most is that its value was $160,000. This would have been computed at the 15-20 per ounce as was the price in 1864. A little computing at today's (April, 1991) prices of $380 per ounce and the treasure would be worth around $3,040,000.

Two of the outlaws were killed by a posse right after the robbery. The third buried the box near where Camas Creek flows into Mud Lake as he was being hotly pursued by the lawmen. Without the burden of the gold he was able to escape and it is thought that he went back East. There he got into trouble with the law again

Entrance to Mud Lake Wildlife Management

and was put in jail. While in jail he told of his lost treasure and drew a map of where it was buried. Apparently he felt he was to be in jail for a long time or he hoped that the soon to be released friend would find the gold and help him to get out.

In 1910 a man appeared in the Mud Lake area and told of his plans to build a better dike on the lake so that he could improve the irrigation of the surrounding farms. He hired a crew of workers and was then joined by a woman who was known to be a 'crystal gazer.' She would look into the crystal and then tell the men where to work. One day the man quit all work on the project. He paid his workers and told them not to come back. It was felt that he had found the treasure as a few days later the man and woman disappeared.

The locals, who knew of the treasure, did not want to believe that the gold had been found. Many of the local residents have looked for the gold.

In 1941 there was a flurry of excitement as a group of men got together with a metal detector and dug into the mud of the lake. They were unsuccessful in finding the treasure but they caused a great amount of interest. More of the locals tried their hand at finding the loot. The most persistent was Mel Neilson of Hamer. He built a pier that led out into the lake. He felt sure that he knew where the gold was but it never surfaced.

To the left of the hill in the center of the picture is where Camas Creek enters the Mud Lake. The lost treasure is supposed to be near the mouth of the Creek.

There have been other stories of prospectors finding the gold but there never was any evidence to support them. If gold was found it would not be that easy to dispose of particularly during the first half of the Twentieth Century. It was against the law to own gold. It would have to have been reported. That much gold would have brought newspaper coverage.

Another account suggests the robbery was in 1865 and was committed by the "famous" Guiness and Updike gang. They were seen throwing gold bars into this "deep" lake just before a posse caught them. This story says an amateur treasure hunter found three of the twenty pound bars in 1901 but the rest are still there.

I like to think that it is still there adding to the many stories of Eastern Idaho.

North Fork of the Teton River

The North Fork of the Teton River (commonly known as Bitch Creek) is the site of a lost gold mine. The names of the men associated with this story are not known or the location of the mine would be a lot easier to find.

North Fork of the Teton River (Bitch Creek) looking upstream from the highway bridge.

A farmer began supplementing his income by making monthly visits to the North Fork and bringing out small amounts of gold. He kept the amounts small to ensure the continued production of the mine and to avoid the rush a large deposit of gold would bring. He would not register a claim because the land was private, although it was located in the side of the canyon wall where it was not being used for any other productive purpose.

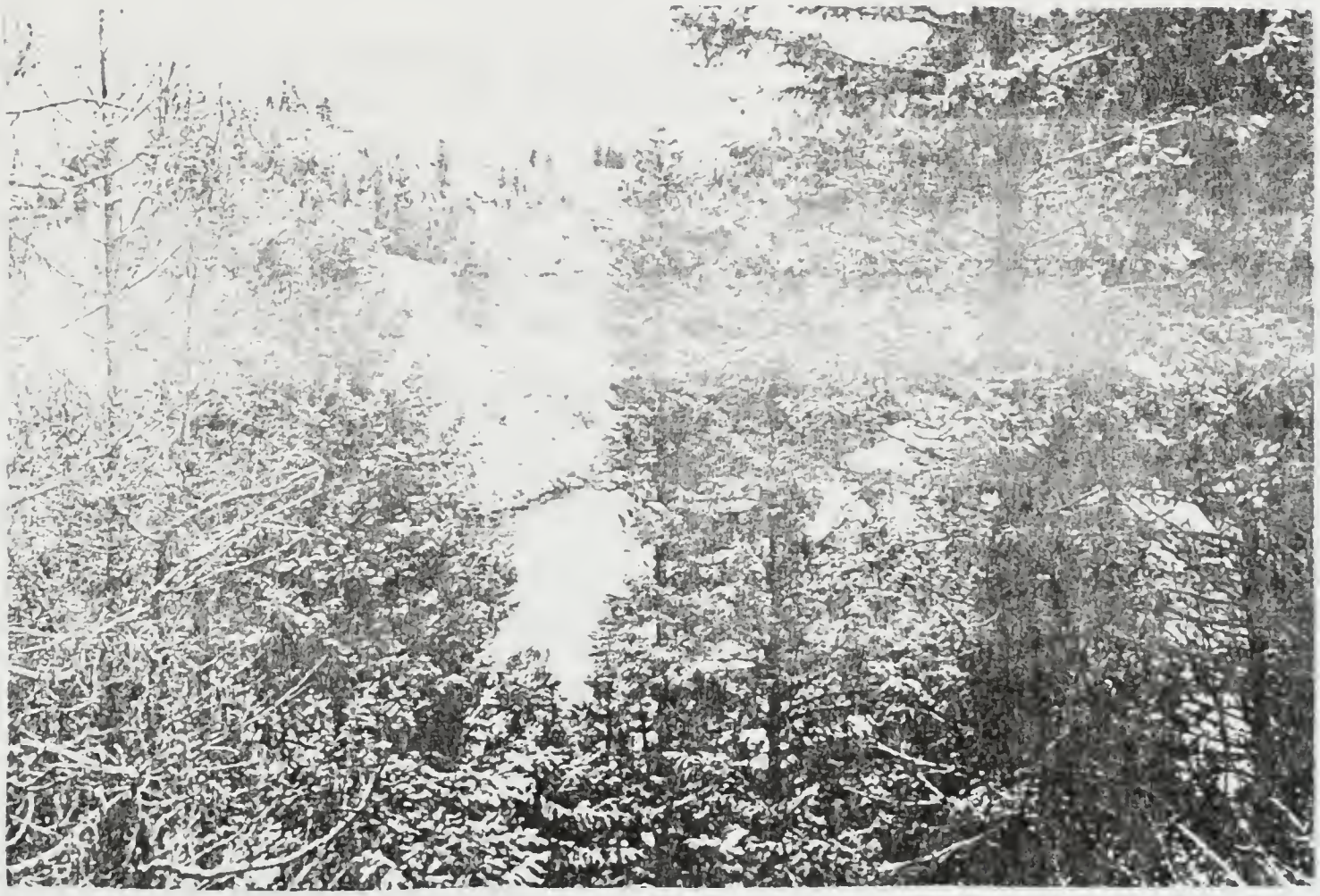
This procedure went on for many years until a sizable hole had been picked out of the rock and it was beginning to resemble a real mine. Those who were curious about where the gold was coming from were told stories of the Teton Mountain Range and other areas. Attempts to follow him failed as he always seemed to be able to detect them and would turn back. No doubt the would be claim jumpers had the miner very nervous and he began to suspect everyone. His health began to suffer.

He took his eight year old son to the edge of the canyon and showed him where the mine was located. In the next few years the father died. The family moved to Utah and the mine was forgotten.

North Fork of the Teton River (Bitch Creek) looking downstream. There is a lot of black sand in this stream suggesting the presence of gold.

The son was in his twenties when he returned to the North Fork of the Teton River. The ravages of winter and erosion had changed the canyon. His youthful memories did not prove too strong as he was unable to locate for sure the place on the canyon rim where he had stood so many years before let alone the site of the mine. He hunted along the canyon wall for several weeks but could not even find a clue.

The vein of gold lies above the Highway 32 bridge crossing on the North Fork of the Teton River just north of Felt, Idaho. I have panned this stream right below the bridge. It has some gold flakes in it but has the problem of black sand being present. It is a great stream to practice in for beginners in panning. You can pan a sand bar down to the black sand in just a few minutes and can see a flake of gold in almost every pan.



Lone Pine Mine

Rod Gatlor and Ike Mackensie were best of friends who had come west to enjoy the scenery and participate in the making of history. They traveled extensively throughout the states and ended up in Salmon, Idaho, in the spring of 1899.

Pooling their remaining funds they decided to invest in a prospecting venture. They bought horses, mules, supplies, and mining equipment. Being greenhorns, they inquired (from several of the old timers of Salmon) what direction they should go to find their fortune in gold. They were told various stories and advised to go in several directions. Almost any direction from Salmon would bring one within a former gold claim.

Finally they set out determined to let the fates take care of them. They were mostly out for the adventure of the trip and the camping with the thrill of discovery to accompany them. They went upstream on the Salmon River for several miles. Noticing a stream coming from the west they crossed the river and began panning. Ike found color in his second pan. They worked their way up the canyon and became more excited with each effort.

They went through the sand bars and gravel for several weeks spending four or five hours a day looking for gold and the rest of the time looking for big game and at the scenery. The adventure they wanted was the camping and the thrill of being in the West.

Somewhere in the vicinity of Opal Lake they made a base camp. There were several ridges in the area that promised a possibility of mountain sheep and they decided to stay for a while. Rod began to set up camp and Ike went for a walk to check out the area. He

walked out on a promontory overlooking the canyon. There he sat under a tall pine tree to watch the sunset and reflect on his future.

Across the canyon a herd of elk moved out of a draw. A magnificent bull led them up the slope. Ike leaped to his feet to go for his gun but the rock crumbled beneath him. He fell to the ground. When he got up the elk had disappeared over a far ridge.

He kicked at the rocks that had been his downfall. Reaching down disgustedly he picked up a rock to throw into the canyon. Its weight surprised him. By now it was dark so he put the rock into his pocket and walked down to the camp.

They examined the rock in the firelight and could see the telltale lines of gold running through it. Excitedly they rushed up to the point but it was too dark to observe anything. Trying to remain calm they went back to the camp and retired for the evening.

Both were up at dawn with picks, hammers, and shovels. At the base of the pine tree was a large rotten vein of quartz interspersed with fine lines of gold. The two prospectors began digging and picking, following the vein into the rock. At the end of the first days work they had a large pile of gold bearing rock and were quite elated. They named their discovery the Lone Pine Mine because of the single tree that sat at the head of the rock they were digging into.

After several months they reached the end of their supplies, a point in their digging that required blasting before proceeding, and a pile of ore that would require overloading of the mules and horses to carry it out. A cold wind and a snow shower helped them decide to leave.

They loaded up their gold and got everything ready to leave. They then spent a couple of hours hiding the fresh cut they had made into the mountain. Satisfied that it would not be stumbled upon by chance, they set out for civilization. They set a pace that would find them in town in three days if the stock held up under their load.

The morning of the third day they arose shivering to find all of their water turned to ice. They had camped on the edge of the Salmon River the night before. It had seemed wise not to attempt a crossing of the river in the dark. Now, as they gazed at the river, there were little chunks of ice floating down. Both sides of the river were covered with ice. To their tenderfoot minds this scared, but did not give warning of possible danger.

They saddled their horses with numb fingers, loaded the gold on the mules, and started into the river. Ike led, followed by loaded mules, and then Rod brought up the rear with his mules. Everything went fine until Rod entered the swiftest part of the stream. Ike and his mules were climbing out of the water when he heard a yell. He turned and saw Rod's horse rearing and Rod

falling into the swift water. Rod splashed a couple of times and then went under.

Ike abandoned the mules and rode downstream to help. Rod's horse came out of the water with his saddle slipped to the side. Ike found Rod's hat and then found Rod wedged under a log. He pulled him out and carried his lifeless body back to the waiting mules. Ike then made his sorrowful way on to Salmon.

Funeral arrangements were made for Rod and then Ike cashed the gold in at the Well Fargo office. It proved to extremely high grade ore and he was left with a small fortune. Placing most of the money in the bank, Ike went to drown his sorrows in the nearest bar.

After the funeral, Ike couldn't seem to get himself interested in anything. He spent considerable time in the saloons and found that he had acquired many new friends. All of his friends were urging him to return to the mine as they wanted to help him mine it and to share in his new found wealth.

A disturbing new feeling came into Ike's conscience. Several times he overheard comments suggesting that he might have killed his partner so that he would not have to share the mine. He lost a couple of his new friends when he heard them discussing whether or not they could trust him.

The whole town of Salmon, caught up in mining fever, seemed to Ike to be accusing him. He left. He loaded up all his belonging in a wagon, told all that he was going back east, and left on the road headed for the nearest railhead. His hope was that all would believe his story if he never went back to the mine. He sent letters from Chicago and New York to his former friends to convince all that he was not coming back.

Ike did not come back. Many of the people of Salmon tried to find the trail used by Ike and Rod but it was lost in the rocky area of Opal Lake near Taylor Mountain. The two had covered the mine sufficiently to make it not easily recognized and it was not to be found.

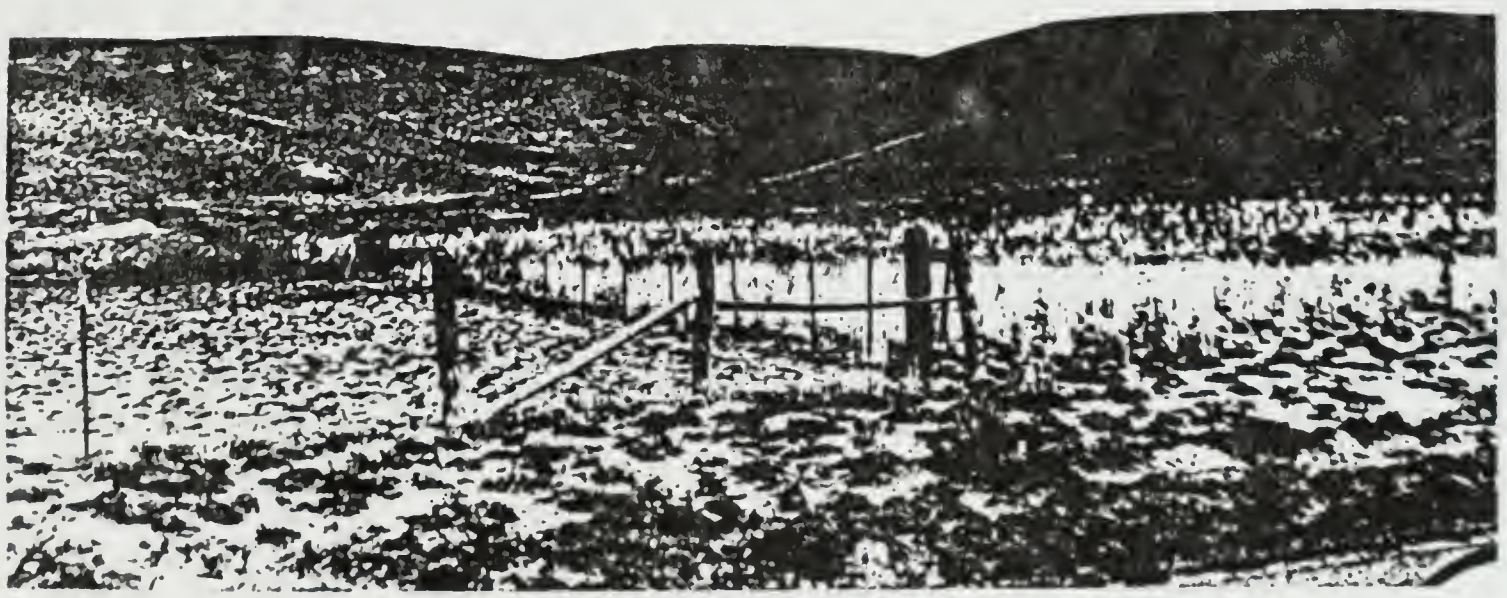
It is quite probable from the description of the lone pine on the edge of a canyon or ridge that it is likely still there. It may have been hit by lightning or fallen because of its exposed position but the remains of the stump should be there. It is not likely that it has been harvested by timber cutters.

Lidy's Hot Springs Buried Gold

This story involves another member of the Plummer gang of outlaws from Montana. George Ives was one of the most famous of

the gang. Apparently he buried a cold cache of fifty thousand dollars (1991 value would be [illegible] thousand dollars) near the Lidy's Hot Springs [illegible]. He and others of the gang were [illegible] River Valley on occasion when they were [illegible] escape from pursuing posses. [illegible] time while waiting [illegible].

A stranger appeared in 1910 in the town of Dubois, Idaho. He was looking for work and soon found a job. He spent his spare time looking around the Lidy's Hot Springs area. After he made some friends in the area he confided to them that he had been a guard in the Idaho State Penitentiary where he had done many favors for one of the inmates. The inmate, whose name was George, responded by telling the guard of a treasure he knew of that had been buried near the springs. The outlaw apparently felt that his stay in the pen was going to be of some length. George would have been getting right along in years by the year 1910.



One of the gulches at Liddy's Hot Springs

The location of the gold involved a particular tree to be found in a certain gulch near the springs. There are many gulches in these foothills on both sides of the springs. I visited the vicinity of the springs in April, 1991, and found the swimming pool gone but the water was flowing down a creek. It appeared that there could be several gulches that might fit the description. Trees in the desert area are a premium as they were removed either for firewood or for building. There are a few juniper trees in view from the highway in front of the old swimming pool. They, however, do not appear to be eighty years old.

The stranger spent a lot of time roaming about the area but was unable to find what he was looking for. At least he did not

The old swimming pool at Liddy's Hot Springs was on the left side of this picture. On the hill are the buildings of a mine shaft in use.

tell any of his friends that he had found anything and he did not leave abruptly which would suggest that he was in a hurry to dispose of a found treasure.

This area is almost as desolate today as it was then. However, at the springs site there is a new mine being worked. I could not find anyone who could tell me what they were mining but there is a large, three story building that appears to house a lift wheel that probably goes down into a mine. A few years ago there was an environmental draft study done to see of the feasibility of growing nursery crops at this site using geo-thermal energy. It concluded that it would be quite expensive. I mention the above because if a mine is being worked here you would need permission to wander about the area looking for a lost treasure.

Lava Gold

This lost treasure comes from a robbery but not one on the Virginia City to Utah route., There were several producing mines in Custer County in the 1880's. The road from Challis followed the present Highway 93 to Arco. From Arco the old road cut across the lava to Blackfoot. There it joined the main north/south road to Utah. When the railroad arrived at Blackfoot the gold from the north and west was loaded there to discourage robberies. It was much harder to stop a train than it was to stop a wagon or a coach.

Tony Bell had fallen on hard times. He had been chased out of Wyoming when he was caught adding to his cattle herd from his neighbor's. Now he was working in the livery barn in Challis. He

was sweeping it out and caring for other peoples horses. He was not to excited about it.

However, within view of his work at the livery was the excitement around the Wells Fargo office. Gold shipments created activity as they went out of the town on a weekly basis. He studied the care with which the shipments were loaded. He watched the guards as they maintained a security check. He noticed how many guards were on the stage and in the stage. Often there were not many inside. Perhaps the company had become lax because there had been no attempts to steal from them on this particular route. The amounts of gold varied from week to week as prospectors from outlying areas brought their ore in at various unscheduled times.

When he felt he had the routine down as well as possible, Tony quit his job and took a leisurely ride from Challis towards Blackfoot. As he rode he watched for any possible hiding places where he could stop the stage. He found several places that looked likely. He would hide himself in ambush and go through a dry run of the robbery. Each of the sites chosen was eliminated through this trial and error method. Finally he chose the right spot.

He camped in the area and watched three passenger coaches come by as he planned and practiced his robbery. Finally he was ready. The next stage by should be the gold coach. He climbed a high rock abutment and watch for it to come.

Typical stagecoach of 1860-80

There are three large buttes rising out of the lava between Arco and Blackfoot. The eastern and middle buttes are only three miles apart and the southern one is several miles from them. The southern butte towers two thousand, three hundred and fifty feet above the rest of the lava and resembles a small mountain range.

There are two small streams flowing off the large southern butte that made it an ideal stopping place for travelers across the lava desert.

Just to the southeast of the butte the trail narrowed because of the lava flow. The smarter stage drivers slowed to a walk to make sure there was no damage to their wheels in this tight trail. They could not turn around in that part of the road and there was excellent cover for the would be outlaw.

As the stage approached the narrow strip it slowed down to a walk. No one wanted to hit a protruding piece of lava and break down in the middle of the desert. At this point in the desert the driver, guards, and passengers had had enough of the desert. Many of them were asleep or almost asleep. The driver had to be cautious because of the trail but the rest succumbed to the heat and the motion of the coach.

There was a shout to stop and all jumped to attention. Bell stood by the right side of the road with his gun leveled. A large pile of rock and brush was in the road and they had to stop. Bell told them they were covered by others so they should not try anything. They looked to the left and saw another outlaw behind a rock with his rifle and hat showing.

Bell had all the passengers get out. He then collected all their valuables. There was no strongbox but his previous observation had noticed packages wrapped in canvas being loaded at the Wells Fargo office. He had the driver and guard lift the package and tumble it over the side of the stage. Collecting all their guns he then allowed the passengers to get back on the stage. During all this procedure he directed conversation to his partner from time to time. The stage then proceeded on its way southeast down the narrow lava corridor towards Blackfoot.

Now all he had to do was escape. He retrieved his hat and rifle from his scarecrow rock and then got his horse ready to leave in the case it became necessary. He then approached the canvas wrapped bundle. Untying the straps around it he was able to take hold of the canvas and roll out the contents. He was staring at two large bars of gold.

He remembered talk of making gold hard to steal by melting it into long bars weighing over one hundred pounds each. The bars were actually one hundred twenty-five pounds each. He covered them up with the canvas and spent an hour trying to find a hiding place for them. His idea was to leave them there for a time until the fervor died out and then he would come back for them at his leisure. In the meantime he could live from the cash he had taken from the passengers.

He found a hole (small cave) in the lava just off the road. He carried and dragged the bars to the hole and placed them in it. Then he covered the area with sagebrush, carefully smoothed out the

marks of his passage, and fixed very precisely in his mind the location of the gold.

Bell then set out to lose himself for a time. His travel went generally to the northwest.

In the meantime the stage went into Blackfoot. There an alarm was sounded and the Wells Fargo men organized a posse. They picked up an Indian scout and went to the site of the robbery. There they established the fact that only one man was involved in the crime. They also spent some time at the scene looking for the gold as they could tell that he did not have two horses and so did not take the gold with him.

The tracks of Bell's horse were found and they set out in pursuit of him. He had followed the main road for several miles and then turned north. A passing freighter had not seen a lone rider and this had alerted the posse to look for where he might have turned off.

As Bell moved northward his tracks were easier to follow. He was making no attempt to cover them up as he felt he was in the clear. There was little traffic in the whole area in those days so there was nothing but his tracks to follow. The posse made good time. They passed present day Howe and turned northwest again into the Little Lost River Valley.

A couple of days later the posse arrived in the town of Salmon having followed Bell up the Little Lost River, down the Pahsimeroi River to the Salmon River, and then down it to the town. The posse split up and looked for him in all the bars in town hoping that he had decided to spend a few days in a town. They soon located their suspect and the word went around until they were all gathered in the Last Chance saloon.

Two of the posse approached Bell while the rest spread out through the room. With one lawman on each side they pulled their guns and confronted their suspect. A quick search of his clothes produced a watch that had been stolen from one of the passengers. Bell then admitted his guilt.

It was decided to return to the scene of the robbery to see if they could convince Bell to show them where the gold was hidden. He was tied to his horse both at the ankles and his hands. The posse was taking no chance on his escaping.

On the trip back Bell showed amazing cooperation. He told his captors that this was his first offense and he offered to lead them to the gold. His casual, friendly manner soon disarmed the posse. Some of them came to look upon him as a cowboy who had more than his share of bad luck. Towards the end of their journey they even quit tying him. He was cooperative in every way and did not try to or even hint at escape. He seemed to feel bad about the robbery and wanted to put it right.

The sun was rapidly approaching the western mountain range as the group moved into the lava. Bell studied the area as they came to the site of the robbery. The sun was now down but it was still light. He lined up the sagebrush and rocks. The posse looked around the area and found nothing. Bell looked again squinting into the gathering darkness. He made a comment about lining up the wrong rock. He then moved to one side, rode behind a large rock, and disappeared.

He was gone for several seconds before the posse realized it. They quickly searched in the dark but he was gone. The next morning an extensive search was made but no trace of the outlaw or his horse was found.

The posse spent several days searching the area for the gold but were unsuccessful in their efforts. They were also unsuccessful in their search for Bell. He had disappeared completely. The two bars of gold together weighed nearly two hundred and fifty pounds. At current prices for gold (April, 1991) that amounts to over one million dollars.

Rumor has it that Bell ended up in Arizona and never came back fearing the relentless pursuit of Wells Fargo. The story is told that someone showed up in Arco, Idaho, a few years back with a map. He asked directions to the old road to Blackfoot and spent several weeks in the area. It was felt that he had not found anything when he left.

Currently there is a road going to the top of the butte that is kept is fair repair. The view from the top of the butte is spectacular, however, a four wheel drive and a lot of courage are needed to take the trip to the top. Getting to the butte is not a problem. The way the Idaho lava has formed it is easy to see why one could not find the hole from directions or from a map. There are too many formations which appear similar that could fit any description. Bell is dead by now and the two bars are waiting for discovery.

Menan Buttes

As a young man in high school in the 50's I heard of a treasure supposedly buried in the "Rustlers Corral" on the south side of the large butte. This larger of the two volcanic cones was used by cattle rustlers to hold their stolen herds until pursuit died down. From their lofty perch they could see any posse coming and leave.

Outlaws would move the herds eastward into Wyoming to sell them or if they had come from that direction they moved them further into Idaho to sell.

On the [illegible] there is a small [illegible] kept a [illegible] this [illegible] them in the [illegible] has [illegible]

The gap to the left of center at the top of this picture of the butte is the entrance to the small corral. It is very rough lava.

This picture of the buttes shows the larger butte on the left. This is the one in which the gold is supposed to have been buried.

My understanding of the story is that you can stretch a string from four different prominent points inside this small corral across it. Where they make an "X" there is supposed to be a treasure buried.

The corral is formed by lava. Erosion and dust have placed a silt covering on the bottom that is several feet in depth in some areas. A metal detector would find the residue of many a scout camp with buried cans.

My friends and I have dug around this corral from time to time and found nothing. We may not have hit all the places in the corral but we hit a lot of them. We also strung string from almost every place that we could tie it. If the treasure ever was there it probably still is.

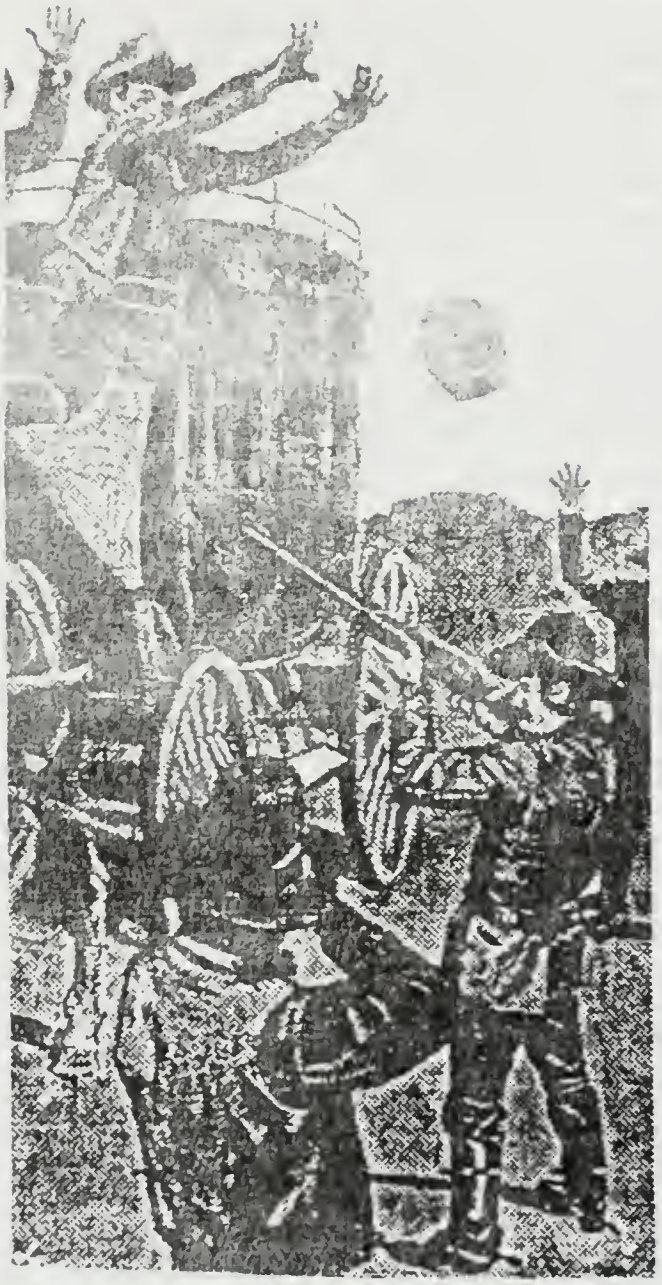
The best part of looking for this treasure is the view of the valley that it gives you from the rim of the crater. You can see into Montana and Wyoming. A knowledgeable person could name all of the mountain ranges that converge on the Snake River Plain from the west that are seen clearly.

Holdup Rock - Beaver Canyon

Here is the Plummer gang again. In studying all the things that were blamed on this group they had to be large and scattered all over the West. It seemed that they were so popular that it was easy to blame them for any hold-up in the entire area. An outlaw who wanted to send a posse the wrong direction could suggest he was a member of the gang. The posse would then think that he would be headed for Montana while he made his escape elsewhere.

This story involved gold in the amount of seventy-five thousand dollars (April, 1991, one million, four hundred twenty-five thousand dollars) and happened just north of Spencer, Idaho, in Clark County. There were several places on the trail/road from Virginia City to Utah that seemed to be perfect for a holdup. The outlaws knew where all these places were and so did the stage drivers. Just north of Spencer there is a place on the old road where rocks on both sides of the path were close to the road. The rocks were so close that travelers had to slow right down to avoid damage to their vehicles. This is where the robbery took place.

There were four outlaws in the group that held up the stage. The usual process for a robbery was to have something in the road that would force the stage to stop. This would be arranged around a corner so that there would not be a chance to turn around or get ready to defend themselves. The outlaws stepped out from the rocks and stopped the coach. The driver had no choice but to throw down the gold box. As the outlaws turned to leave the driver chose to



shoot at them. They returned the fire and some of the passengers were hurt.

The stage continued on down the road and ran into a group of riders. Upon hearing of the story the group became a posse and went after the robbers. They cornered the outlaws in a canyon and there was a shoot out. Two of the outlaws were killed outright and the other two were hanged shortly after. The box of gold was never found.

When the Utah Northern railroad went through the Monida Pass into Montana the area near the robbery became quite a lively town known as Beaver Canyon. The story of the robbery made for great discussion among the residents and transients of the community as it was common knowledge that the treasure chest was never recovered. Many of them looked for the treasure. Some of them kept the story alive as it kept people in town for a longer time spending their money.

It has always been told that the gold was buried near the railroad "Y" near the town of Beaver Canyon although there is nothing to support why this was the location. There is not much left of Beaver Canyon today and unless you can find good directions would drive right by it without knowing you were there.

Buffalo River

It is amazing to me that there could be so many buried treasures and one lost mine connected to the same river. The Buffalo River is quite short compared to most rivers. It is only a few miles long from its source to its confluence with the Snake River. Yet there are almost a dozen lost treasures connected to the stream and one lost mine.

I have studied the history of the area and of Eastern Idaho to see why outlaws performing a robbery on the trail from Montana to Utah would chose this river as the place to hide their gold. There are no frequented trails running near the river or any old establishments that would suggest resupply or rest. The only reason I can supply for this much traffic would be that it does

form a sort of natural way to get out of Idaho into Wyoming. The robberies occurred in the west on the trail. The natural escape to the east would be up the Shotgun Valley to Island Park. Then you would turn southeast to head for the low hills traversed by the Reclamation Road to get into northern Jackson Hole. This route would take you by the Buffalo River.

The following stories are regarding treasures that were buried in the vicinity of the Buffalo River. There is also one lost gold mine in the area. I have reserved for the time being a few of the details of this lost mine as it is one that I am currently investigating. Sorry about that.

Buffalo River I

Jake Donahue and his friend, Harry Winston, found themselves in strange company. It was July, 1863. My story says this was the date but just below it suggests this group made their alliance in the town of Blackfoot. Blackfoot was not in existence in 1863 so I would suggest the robbery took place at a much later date.

A party of seven men were camped on the road just south of present day Pocatello in the Portneuf Canyon. They had made the strange alliance the night before in a bar in Blackfoot. A large man known only to them as Bart had approached the two men to enlist their aid in a project to relieve a shipment of gold from Virginia City, Montana, miners. The two had obviously appeared to be the type who would join in a venture. Bart's story of instant riches had sounded good and now Jack and Harry were crouched by the road waiting in the Idaho summer heat for the signal to attack.

A large tree had been chopped down across the road just beyond where the path turned a corner. As the stage came around the corner the driver hauled back on the reins and slid the coach to a stop. The sudden stop upset the guard and threw all the passengers from their seats. Before they could recover and react they were under the guns of several outlaws.

All the passengers were lined up outside the stage. One of them kept staring at Bart. The passengers said, "I know you, you're...!" A shot rang out and then two more. Then there seemed to be a general exchange of gunfire.

When the smoke cleared two of the passengers and one guard were dead and two of the others were laying on the ground wounded. The outlaws took the valuables from the passengers and the strongbox from the coach. There was one hundred fifteen thousand dollars in gold (over two million, one hundred thousand dollars April, 91) in the strong box.

The outlaws mounted and moved out to the north. One had his arm bandaged and the other wounded man has been hit in the stomach. He was tied onto his horse so they could continue.

A Common Confrontation

Their plan of escape was to follow the road northward to Spencer and then turn east to lose themselves in the forests of Island Park. From there they could split up and go in many directions.

The stagecoach driver got the passengers and victims loaded and proceeded on his way. They went only a few miles before they met a long train of freight wagons. The remaining guard organized a posse to give immediate chase. They picked up reinforcements at Blackfoot and were not too far behind the outlaw group.

Jake and Harry were riding along in shock. They had not envisioned a gun fight and especially any deaths. They made plans to escape as soon as possible from the rest of the outlaw band. They had approached Bart for a split of the loot. He told them there was no time to divide it up until they were free from pursuit. They would split the gold when they camped at Camas Meadows. Jake suggested to Harry that they would leave as soon as the split was made and they could sneak away.

When they arrived in the Kilgore/Camas Meadows area there were some strong feelings emerging. The man wounded in the stomach was getting worse. Bart was becoming impossible to be with as he was demanding everyone follow his rules completely. Most of the rest were trying to ignore him. There was a lot of excitement to split the gold as no one really knew exactly how much gold they had.

Each Individual Hid His Gold

They gathered around the fire and Bart brought out a set of scales. It took about an hour to divide the gold into seven parts. As they split up for the evening each man hid his share as now the uniting force of the undivided gold was gone. Each was on his own.

The next day they all set out with each making his own plans for the future. As they started into the Shotgun Valley, Harry looked back and saw a group of riders coming out of the trees. He let out a shout and they all spurred into a gallop. Shots were exchanged but the two groups were too far apart for any accuracy.

After a quick burst of speed they slowed their horses to save their strength in case of a need for speed. They also turned off the trail hoping to lose the posse. Bart cursed Jake and Harry blaming them for the posse catching up. It made no sense but they had been the most vocal regarding the need to split the gold. Bart seemed to think the time taken splitting the gold was the reason the posse had caught up.

The posse fell quickly behind as they lost the outlaws in the trees. They had ridden hard from the scene of the robbery to Fort Hall where they had exchanged their horses. Then they rode steadily to Spencer where another horse exchange was accomplished. They were on fresh mounts as they followed the outlaws to Kilgore only to lose them in the trees and darkness.

The posse camped only a mile from the fugitives that night but neither group was aware of the other. It had been as much a surprise for the posse when they emerged from the trees to see

their quarry ahead as it had been for the outlaws. The darkness did not allow them to see where the outlaws turned from the trail and they had to camp to wait for light to continue tracking. The outlaws did not need to track and fled quickly to the east.

Two of the outlaw horses gave out at the Buffalo River. Supplies and gold were carried by the remaining men and the two ran alongside for a couple of miles. Then another horse collapsed. A council was held and it was decided to make a stand against the posse. Each outlaw was assigned an area to guard. Each again hid his portion of the gold, burying it in a place close to his position.

Early in the morning three of the men were missing. They had left without horses, determined to walk out of the country. Their gold was too heavy to carry and it was left where they had buried it. The four left were Jake, Harry, Bart, and the wounded one. Bart was furious and began berating the others blaming them for everything that had gone wrong.

Bart checked his wounded friend and found that he had died during the night. This added to his fury. He was building himself into a maniacal rage. Jake and Harry cowered before him but remain alert, fearing an attack.

Bart grabbed for his gun but in his rage dropped it. Jake and Harry both fired and killed him. Fearing the shots would bring the posse they quickly saddled up and left. They did not take time to dig up their gold shares as they heard a horse whinny. They moved eastward, trying to hurry in the dark of pre-dawn, and said good riddance to the gold that had caused them so much trouble.

The posse followed as far as the Buffalo River where they lost the trail. They heard the shots and the next morning found the camp. They collected the two bodies and then searched for sign of the others. They could not find anything. Many of the posse wanted to quit pursuit as they had jobs and work in the mines waiting for them in Virginia City. What had seemed like a lark in the chase had turned into real work and the pay was not that rewarding. The decision was made to abandon the chase to the regular law enforcement officials. The posse returned to Virginia City.

The passengers killed in the original robbery were prominent men in Virginia City. Their friends offered a bounty on the outlaws and also hired professional man hunters to find and kill the surviving outlaws. The three were killed in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Jake and Harry disappeared. They were apparently wise enough to take heed of the warnings and rumors and left the country completely.

The Buffalo River is not very long. It is only about ten miles in length. The seven piles of gold that were buried by these outlaws are thought to be within several yards of each other and not too far from the shores of the river. Since there would be

considerable publicity connected to the discovery of one of these caches of gold it is assumed that they are still there.

Buffalo River II

A series of robberies and attempted robberies of gold in the latter 1860's from Virginia City, Montana, gave Gus Haroldson an inventive idea. He went to several mine owners and convinced them that a secret mule train loaded with gold could get through where the stage coaches were being stopped. The owners were so enthusiastic about the idea that he soon had more mules and gold than he could handle on his own. The owners suggested that he hire someone to help but not let him know what was being carried.

Tim Harper was in Virginia City and had just been fired as a guard at one of the larger mines. He had been on a double shift and had gone to sleep on duty. He normally was a very conscientious worker but the extra work combined with the boredom of the job had done him in and he went to sleep.

Now he was out of work. Gus approached him for help in taking the supply mules back to Salt Lake City to obtain things needed for the mines. Tim had a good reputation and Gus felt that he could handle the job. He offered Tim the going wage and they set a date for leaving.

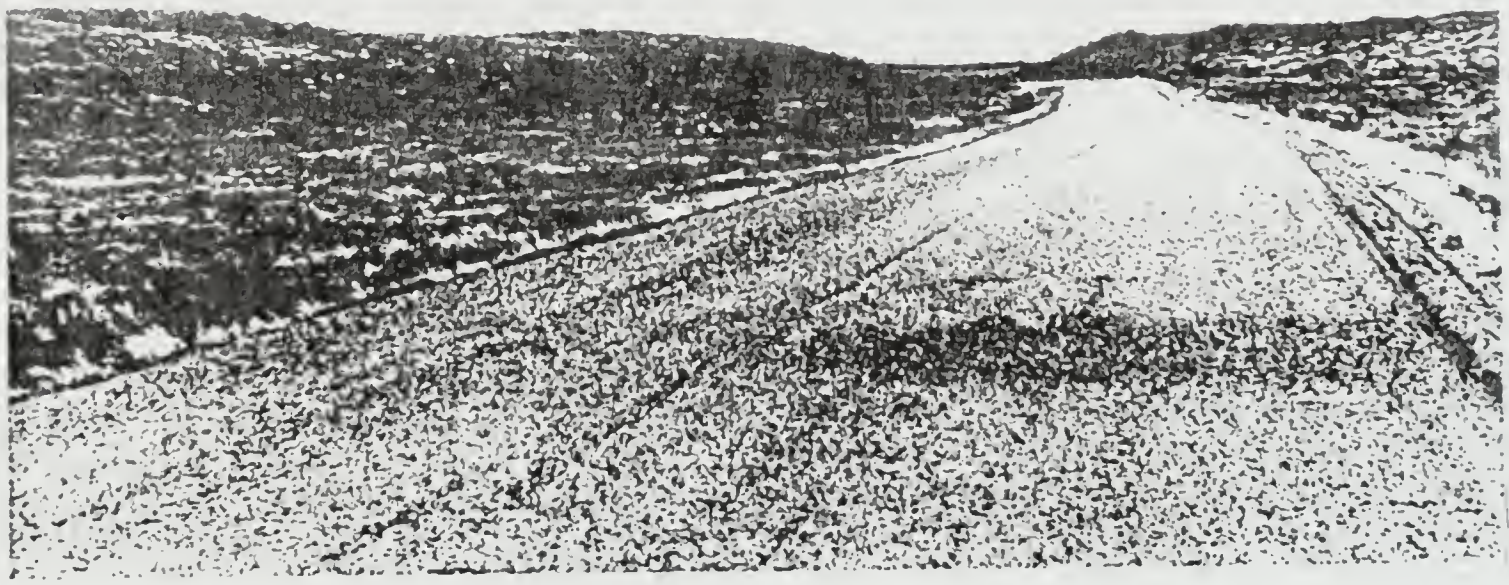
When Tim arrived it was midnight. He thought it was a strange time to leave but that was what his orders had been. He also thought it was strange that the mules seemed to be loaded. He had thought they were going to be traveling empty. He decided he would investigate out on the trail to see what they were carrying. He was not a dummy and had a suspicion they might be carrying gold.

One string of mules was ready and Tim was told to start out on a trail over the hills that paralleled the road to Salt Lake City. Gus would soon follow and catch up somewhere down the line.

Tim set a fast pace and was several miles ahead by the time the sun came up. He moved along all day at a good rate and gained more distance. That night he looked inside the packs and found them full of gold. Each sack weighted one hundred pounds and each mule carried two sacks.

The next day Tim spent reflecting on the deception played upon him. He grew angrier with each passing mile. He was being paid trail wages and "not guarding gold" wages. More pay was going to be demanded of Gus when they got together. The deception continued to bother him as he progressed down the trail.

Moving out of the pass through the mountains dividing Montana and Idaho Tim entered the sagebrush and lava of the Snake River



The lava area of the Snake River Plain was excellent for hiding anything. There are many small caves that could hold gold bars or a sack of dust. The problem was finding the hiding place again as the country tends to look the same.

Plain near Dubois, Idaho. He stopped the mules for a rest. His anger caught him up in an elaborate scheme. He took two bags of gold from two of the mules and hid them in a cave. He then proceeded on down the road to Blackfoot. He encountered no problem on the rest of the trip.

He reported to the freight company office that he had lost two mules for a while. He claimed to have run into a swarm of bees and two of the mules had charged away wildly through the desert. He had tied the rest of the mules and then followed the two errant animals. He caught the mules but their empty packs were torn from the brush and rocks and were no longer usable. The sacks had been discarded as being totally useless. Tim was advised to remain in town to wait for Gus before moving on. Tim was planning to remain in town because he wanted his pay for trailing the mules.

Gus arrived later in the day and was very agitated at not having caught up. He was furious when told of the bee story and he accused Tim of stealing the gold. Tim claimed innocence and expressed surprise that they had been carrying gold. He even exhibited some anger at carrying gold and not being made aware of it.

The missing gold amounted to four hundred pounds in weight. This would amount to just under two and one half million dollars (April, 1991.)

Gus threatened Tim with jail but a judge told him there was no evidence. Tim was allowed to go free proclaiming his innocence and griping about being hired to take care of the mules without the knowledge of their being loaded with gold. He talked a lot about not knowing of the gold and how his life was in jeopardy because of it.

Several men were hired to watch Tim and to follow him if he left Blackfoot. Tim bought an outfit and supplies. He also bought a couple of mules. He stayed around town for a week to relax the vigilance of his watchers and then he left. He told any who wanted to know that he was headed for the mines of the Challis area and left traveling west. He went west for several days and then could detect no one on his trail. He then turned north. By the time he came to the vicinity of the gold he had lost all pursuit.

He located the gold and moved as quickly as he could to the east. After several miles his horse came up lame as it had scraped itself on the sharp lava. He redistributed the load and climbed on a mule himself. He turned the horse loose. Now he panicked, feeling that his rapid means of escape was gone. He rushed on into Island Park.

The pace was too much on his heavily loaded mules. They could go no further with the double loads. They were worn out completely. At the Buffalo River he decided to bury the gold. Fearing discovery of the hidden treasure he placed the gold in two different sites. That way if one were found the other would remain hidden. He then mounted the stronger mule and decided to return to Fort Hall to further establish his claim of innocence. This would also eliminate some of the pursuit. Time always seems to lessen the degree of the chase.

The men following Tim had lost his trail on the lava west of the Snake River. They knew the robbery had taken place north of the Market Lake but south of the range of mountains in the Rocky Mountains that separate Montana from Idaho. They split up to see if they could find any sign of his trail.

Carefully moving along the main road they came to a spot where a horse and two mules had crossed. The horse showed signs of bleeding as spots of blood were seen. The track of the horse were the same that they had been following when they left Blackfoot. They had found their man. They also noted that the mules were leaving a deeper track in the sand than before. This caused them to assume that the gold had been picked up and increased their desire to catch up.

They went through the Kilgore area, up the Shotgun Valley, and into Island Park. They crossed the Snake River and began following the Buffalo River upstream. At a pause, while the horses were

resting, they heard a sound of someone approaching. The posse hid in the trees and watched a lone man riding a mule get right up to them before they rode out.

One of the treasure sites was located between the lodge and the Island Park Dam. This is the Buffalo River looking downstream from the bridge.

Tim was caught completely by surprise. He did not even attempt to put up a fight. They quickly disarmed him and then tried to get a confession regarding the robbery from him. It was obvious that he did not have the gold with him. He was not about to admit to the robbery as he felt that they might just kill him and not let him go to jail. Several of the posse had been robbed from before and might just be inclined to do some vigilante justice.

Methods of persuasion in the Old West could sometimes get quite rough. The posse put a rope around his neck to scare him. He was scared. He then confessed to the robbery and told them that he had buried the gold in two separate places. Then he realized that keeping the location of the gold secret might be the only thing between him and a hanging. He clammed up. They questioned and threatened but he would not say any more. In desperation they pulled the rope tight one too many times and he died.

The posse left Tim hanging from the tree as they tried to trail the mule. They lost the trail in the river although they did find the second mule. They hunted up and down the river trying to find sign of the land being disturbed. They finally tired of their

efforts and went back to Blackfoot. The luckless outlaw was left hanging in the tree.

Rumor tells that many years later a man who had been working on the dam of the Island Park reservoir stumbled over a rock. The rock turned out to be a skull. This man had heard the story and upon investigation found a frayed piece of rope in a near tree. He knew the story of the lost treasure and began a systematic search of the area.

Apparently he found one of the burial sites and took the gold. Then he left the country. The story suggests that he sold the gold in Pocatello and then disappeared. This was in the days when it was against the law to own refined gold in the United States. Perhaps this is why he didn't want to stay around longer to look for the other treasure.

With this discovery there would still be about one and a quarter million dollars worth of gold left in the two bars that should weight nearly one hundred pounds apiece. Perhaps the weathering of the past hundred years might have exposed a gold bar or the corner of a bar.

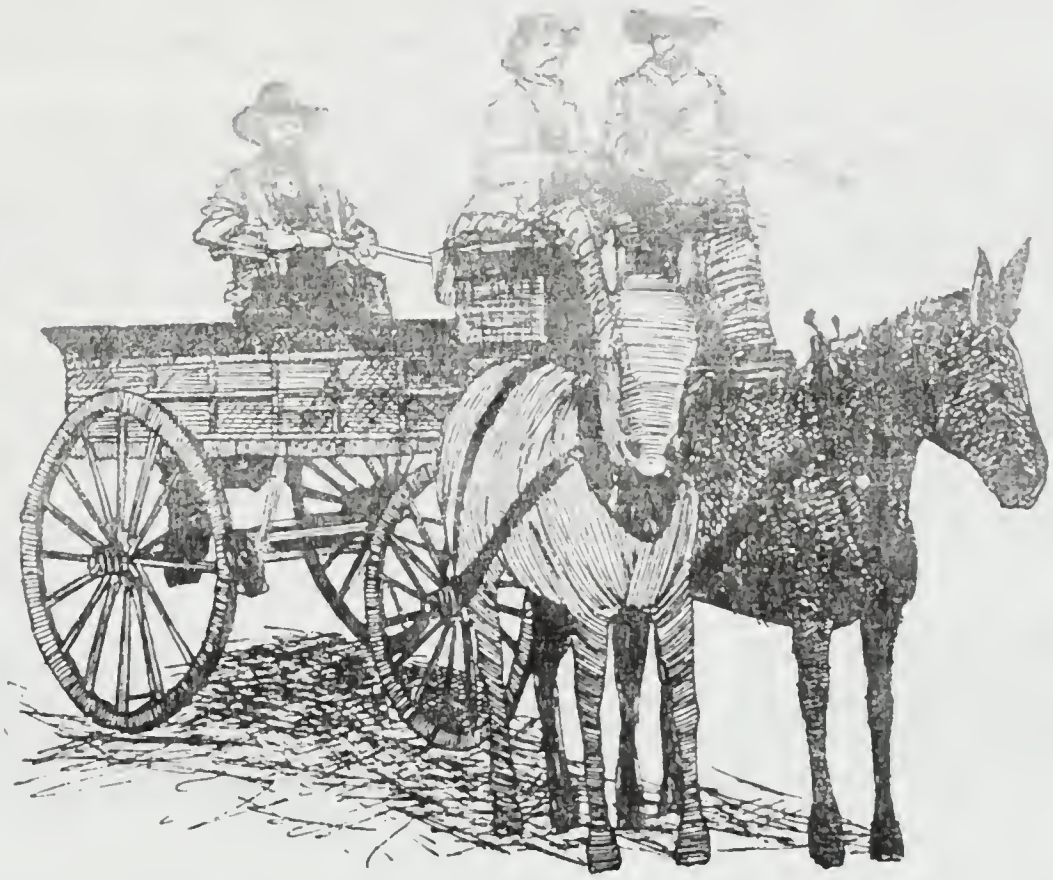
Buffalo River III

In 1880 the town of Bonanza in Custer County was one of the largest towns in the territory of Idaho. It had over ten thousand inhabitants and all of the various buildings which accompany a town of that size. Today it is a ghost town hiding the knowledge that large amounts of gold were taken out of this placer mining area of mountains.

Angus Rockwell was a drifter. He made his living following the gold camps doing odd jobs for the miners. He was sweeping the saloon next door to the freight office when he overheard the guards discussing the next gold shipment. His job didn't seem worthy of keeping the conversation down. He heard enough to know that they were leaving the next day with a wagon load of gold.

The guards arose at three in the morning. It took them an hour to harness the six horses and load the boxes of gold. They were carrying one hundred fifty thousand dollars (April, 1991, prices would be just under four million dollars) worth of gold. This amounted to some six hundred pounds of the ore. No one noticed their departure and they were in good spirits as they moved down the road.

A few miles out of Bonanza the trail went through a narrow defile. Just after they entered the gorge a voice ordered them to stop. The two guards and the driver were exposed sitting in the wagon and they could do nothing to defend themselves. The guards



Typical Wagon With Guards

did not know how many were stopping them or where they might be located. It seemed like the perfect spot for the perfect crime.

The voice instructed them to throw their guns over the road into the creek bed. Then they were ordered to throw the boxes of gold off the wagon. One guard objected and was immediately shot in the shoulder. The others tumbled the boxes out of the wagon without further argument. They were then told to proceed on down the canyon and to not return.

Agnus knew they would return but hoped that he could be well on his way before they were able to come back. He had a string of mules that had been hidden in the trees and quickly brought them to the boxes of gold. He loaded the six hundred pounds of gold on the mules and left setting a fast pace to put as much distance between himself and the scene of the crime as possible before pursuit began.

I have not been able to determine whether the gold was still in the placer operation of dust or whether it had been melted into bars for convenience of shipping and inconvenience of stealing. Hundred pound bars of gold had proven harder for outlaws to carry and also to dispose of. It was easy to walk into almost any town in the West and sell gold dust. Bars might be questioned.

Pushing the pack mules as fast as he could, he headed for the Salmon River. He followed the river for a few miles and then turned eastward. We don't know which canyons he used to get out of the Salmon country or which ranges of mountains he may have crossed but he did emerge onto the Snake River Plain. He then turned northward, staying near the western hills of the plain.

His plan was to get to Virginia City where he could hide out in the masses of miners working the area. If he could file a claim in the area or buy a supposedly worked out claim he could then pretend to work the area and filter his newly found gold into the main stream of gold traffic of this famous gold mining camp.

When he got to Spencer his plans changed. Word of the robbery had preceded him and the law in Montana had been alerted to check all strings of mules coming in from Idaho Territory. He was not under suspicion in Spencer as he had left his mules tied up in a nearby ravine while he went into the town to purchase supplies and get information.

His original plan had to be altered. He thought now that he should hide the gold and lay low for a year or so until all pursuit had ended. Then he could go back to the plan of getting the gold into the Montana mining area. It only meant a delay in achieving his goal.

Angus went back to the mules and set out in an easterly direction. As he rode along he kept mulling over in his mind the way the news of the robbery had beat him across the country. He began pushing the mules a little faster as he could imagine ae posse gaining on him hourly. They would be gaining as they did not have mules to slow them down.

He went along the foothills at the bottom of the Centennial Range into Island Park. Before the building of the Island Park Dam and the subsequent reservoir the natural trail went from the Shotgun Valley near the Buffalo River. People headed for Yellowstone Park would turn north there. Others could head for Jackson Hole to the southeast or to the Snake River Plain to the south. It was a junction point in the trail.

With his mules exhausted, Angus decided to stop for a while. The security of the forest and the distance from Bonanza lulled him into feeling that pursuit would be hopelessly lost. He found a good place to hide the boxes of gold. There are a lot of small caves, bushy groves, and rocky overhangs in the area. It would not be hard to find a place that could be covered up to hide any would be treasure from a hunter or posse member.

Satisfied that no one would be able to find the cache but himself he left. As with many criminal minds he felt that he was quite secure now. He decided to go back to Bonanza. He sold his mules at Spencer and made his way leisurely back towards his former working grounds. He felt he could suggest that he had been out prospecting in the surrounding mountains and that would

sufficiently explain why he was not around. He did not want anyone to question his disappearance at about the same time as the robbery. He did bring a little of the gold back with him to substantiate his story. The quitting of jobs after earning a grub stake was quite common in mining areas. After all, the only reason anyone went to a mining area was to discover the big bonanza and become wealthy.

Right after the robbery a posse had been gathered in Bonanza. The mine owners wanted to punish severely anyone who partook in a robbery to discourage further attempts. The posse found a mule trail and it led them to Salmon. This string of mules had been loaded with salt and belonged to a legitimate business concern that many of them had bought from in the past. They knew that their haste had caused them to miss where Angus had turned off with his string of mules.

They knew they were following one man and knew how many mules he had. This much knowledge they had gained from careful inspection of the site of the robbery. Returning from Salmon they discovered the trail that Angus had used when he left the main road from Bonanza to Salmon. This delay had given Angus a good lead.

More bad luck plagued the posse as they emerged from the mountains to enter the lava of the Snake River Plain. The lava did not leave a trail and his direction was totally lost. They had to return to Bonanza completely frustrated at the loss of six hundred pounds of gold.

The mining men were not about to let that much gold go without a better attempt to find out who got it. Investigation around the town had brought to light the knowledge that a local drifter named Angus had disappeared the same time as the robbery. Further investigation found that he had purchased several mules and supplies late one night. Suspicion was focused on this one person.

Further investigation revealed that he fit the description of the one outlaw seen at the site. Notices were sent all over the Territory that this man was wanted for questioning with regard to the well publicized theft.

By now Angus was in Mackay, not too many miles from Bonanza. He was not aware that he was being sought and was still using his same name. He did not have anything to hide. He was recognized in this town and arrested. He loudly proclaimed his innocence until the officers showed up from Bonanza with their bulk of incriminating evidence.

I can't believe he went back to the same area. From where he was in Island Park he could have easily gone to Jackson Hole and on to Denver and melted in with the local populations there to later come back and claim his buried loot.

The law enforcement officers pinned him to the crime and convinced him to admit his guilt. He finally decided there were

too many circumstances proving he did it and the officers also seemed inclined to leave him in jail until he confessed. He admitted the theft of the gold. The fact that he had some of the gold on his person also helped convince him that he was not going to get away with anything.

After confessing to the crime he seemed more relaxed. He was a congenial outlaw and happily agreed to lead the lawmen to the hidden loot. His explanation of his burying the gold on the Buffalo River because of the condition of his mules seemed quite logical to the lawmen. His description of the burial spot for the gold was so detailed that the lawmen also knew that he had to accompany them or they would never be able to find it.

His manner was cooperative and his guards soon relaxed their guard. Their cunning adversary was biding his time looking for an opening to escape.

They went from Mackay down the Big Lost River into the desert. Then they turned northward. When they crossed his original trail, Angus delighted in telling the posse what he had done to lose his sign. With his help they were able to continue on the trail through the Camas Meadows, through Shotgun Valley, and on into Island Park.

It was approaching evening and an argument started among the posse as to whether they should camp then and proceed on to the Buffalo River in the morning or go on in the dark. Some had been on the trail for so long they were anxious to terminate the hunt as soon as possible. Others argued that they might pass something in the dark that would cause needless backtracking the next day. The argument rose in volume and almost came to blows but it was interrupted by a shout.

Angus had just stayed out of the argument and tried to seem as insignificant as possible. As it grew darker a plan began to form in his mind. He looked about and fixed in his mind some landmarks that he could navigate in the dark.

He took advantage of the distraction of the loud argument and charged into the brush. He disappeared. The shout aroused the others and they fired a couple of shots after him but he was gone. They could hear him but could see nothing. A couple tried to follow but found themselves in danger of hurting their horses. The sound of his horse diminished quickly.

The next day the posse set out in ill humor to find and punish this outlaw who had caused them so much problem. They trailed him into Island park where his sign turned northward. His trail was lost in a rocky area but the direction he was traveling suggested that he was headed for Montana.

A rider was sent on to alert the Montana law officers. The rest of the posse went back to set up a camp on the Buffalo River. They had been fooled before and they were not going to rush into

Montana leaving the fugitive to circle back to pick up more gold and disappear.

For three weeks the posse made daily trips along the river looking for sign of his return or sign of his original camp. Nothing was found. The idea began to emerge that maybe he had not come to the Buffalo River in the first place. Most of the posse left to go back to their work in Bonanza. Three were assigned to stay on for a full month more.

Angus went into Montana staying out of sight of towns and people. He would sneak into a camp for food and for a while rode the grub line of the ranches. He maintained a low profile so no one would remember him. He felt he would be safer the farther north he went. He knew he wanted to stay away from Virginia City and any other mining areas. He knew they would be looking for him in those places. He felt he could hide in cattle country much easier.

He got a job with a cattle ranch near Helena. To make his cover better he joined the other cowboys in looking down on mining and miners and in building up the glories of the cattle business. A local miner took exception to what was being said and challenged him to a fight. Angus was killed in the fight. Once again he made a bad choice.

His description then came to the attention of the law. An officer sent to Montana confirmed the identity as the outlaw who was being sought. This brought an end to the official search for the gold.

Lost Gold Mine - Island Park

In 1882, Bob Jordan left the crowded gold fields of Mackay, Idaho, with two of his partners to seek their luck in Eastern Idaho. They had hear stories of buried treasure and lost gold in the area and thought they might have a chance of finding something. Color had been found on some of the streams in the area and they wanted a change of scenery. Stories had specifically mentioned the Buffalo River in Island park and this was where they were going to begin their search.

They took the usual route to that part of Idaho. From Mackay they moved down the Big Lost River out onto the lava desert till the water disappeared into the sand. The group then turned north. They were paying attention to their back trail as there was a rumor started just before they left that they knew where a buried treasure was. They also tried to cover their trail in case they did find something.

The placer gold on the Buffalo River originates in these hills to the east. These hills are the west boundary of Yellowstone Park.

At Spencer they listened to the local gossip and then struck out eastward following the natural trail used by those going to Yellowstone Park. It went through Camas Meadows into the Shotgun Valley. The Shotgun Valley opens into Island Park and the trio soon found themselves camping at the mouth of the Buffalo River in the middle of the wilderness.

They set up camp and then each went to a different sandbar to try their luck in panning for gold. When they assembled back at the camp they compared their notes. Each had found color in his pan but Bob had found several flakes in each of his pans. The decision was made to work slowly up the river making careful notes as to what was found where. They would move their camp whenever it was necessary. This method of search was used to find where the gold was most concentrated and if possible the source of it.

It was slow, painstaking work. Each man spent several hours a day bent over the stream testing pans of dirt. At the end of a week they were several miles upstream and felt they were nearing the end of the hunt. The stream was getting lower and narrower. It could not go on much further.

Early in the afternoon of the third day of the second week there was no sign of gold in the pans. They were almost to the headwaters of the Buffalo River. Bob got excited as they took a stick to mark the last place they had found color.

They spent the rest of the day moving their camp as they felt now they could establish a permanent base camp. Happy and elated at finding the end of the color the prospectors went to bed confident that they would find the "mother lode" the next day.

At dawn they got up eager to find the main vein. Each took a different area to search. They were so anxious to find the gold that none of them took the time to eat lunch. When they assembled that evening they were all disappointed as nothing had been found.

The next day each took a different area to search. Again nothing of value was found. For the next six days the routine varied little. They were sure the gold was near but their search was fruitless. Their enthusiasm waned and some depression began to grow.

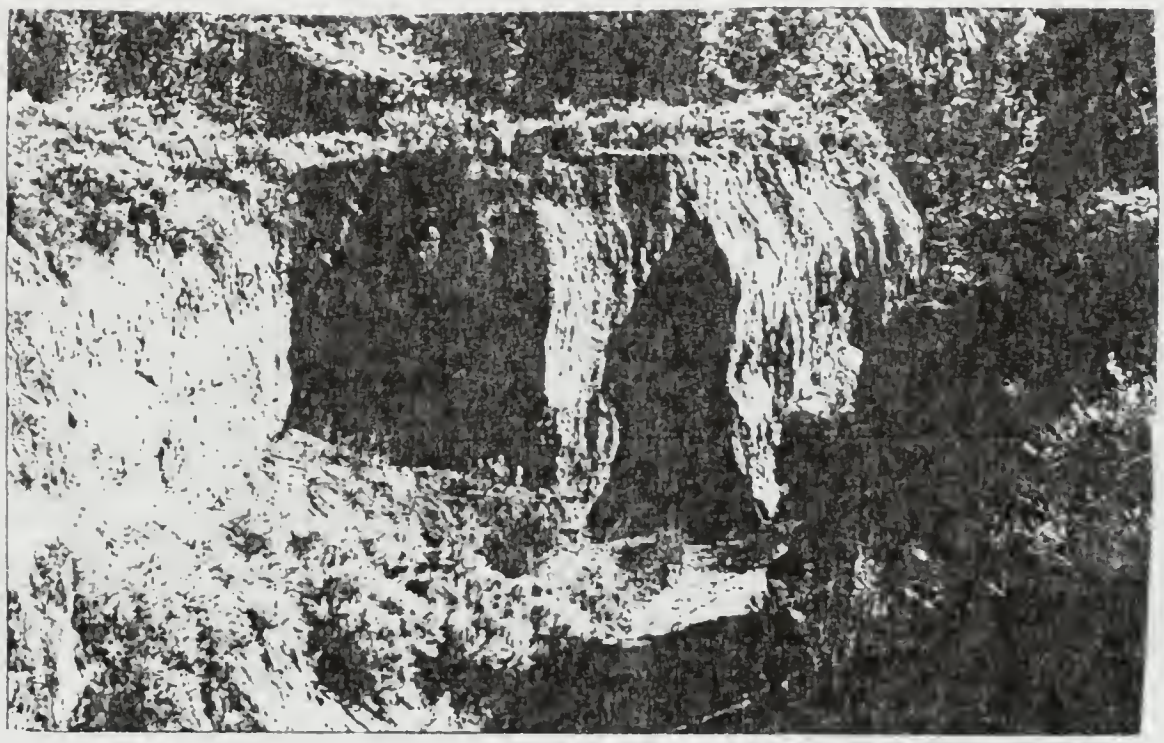
On the eighth day of their search the larger of Bob's two partners sat down on a ledge overlooking the river to take a rest. He was a very large man and it did not take much to tire him. As he contemplated the scene and tried to decide where to look next his eyes were drawn to a ground squirrel busily working about twenty yards further down the ledge. There was something odd about the pile of dirt being deposited up from the industry of the squirrel. Suddenly he realized that the uniqueness of the pile was the reflection of the sun coming off it. There was quartz in the pile of soil.

He moved down to the hole and found a vein of quartz running along the ledge and under the soil. He could see the cracks of gold in the quartz. The ledge was located in a lower area on the side of the hill which showed considerable signs of erosion. As he studied the slope below the ledge he saw several nuggets of the gold that had broken loose to begin their slide to the river below.

He fired a shot to bring the other two running. They were excited to see that the vein had finally been discovered. They began a discussion of how best to remove the gold. They set up shifts to dig and pick at the vein because there was not room for all of them to work together on the ledge. They would pick at the exposed vein, smash the rock, and then gathered the larger pieces to carry down to the camp. They were going to have to take the rock back to Mackay to process as that was the nearest smelter.

As the vein moved into the hill large amounts of dirt had to be dug away from the original rock. They threw the dirt up on the sides of the tunnel thinking it could be removed farther away later. They were more concerned with obtaining as much gold as possible than they were worried about their ditch caving in. Besides, if the ditch did fall in, they could always shovel it out again.

After working the mine for about a month they had a considerable amount of ore piled up. They compared the gold ore with the possibility of their horses and mules being able to carry it out and came to the conclusion that they better quit the



Typical gulch in a high erosion area of Island Park.

mining. They needed to get this ore out and then file a claim on the mine before anyone else discovered it. They were not too worried as the only people they had seen during their stay were a few people headed for Yellowstone Park. These people had been seen far from their camp by one of the miners while he had been out hunting for game to supplement their supplies.

Bob suggested that they shut the mine down, hide it, and go to Mackay to cash in the gold and get supplies for the next year. They could file a claim at this time. This was the plan that was agreed upon.

One side of the passage had developed a large crack. It was about to cave into the ledge. The men probed the crack with long poles and suddenly it fell in covering the ledge. They then shoved dirt off the other side until it was almost level. They gathered and scattered leaves, some brush, and some tree limbs across this to disguise it. As they stood back to survey their work they were quite pleased and sure that no one would be able to happen upon the site except by accident. It blended in with the rest of the land about and some weathering would make it almost completely disappear.

Their camp had been kept away from the mine some distance in case a stranger walking into the area would discover where the mine was or what was going on. Each trip to the mine from the camp had been taken on a different route so no path would be established to lead a searcher.

The spring melt in the Island Park basin leaves water standing in ponds all over. The weather determines how fast the water moves into the rivers and how much soil is taken with it.

As they loaded up to leave, each cast his eye in the direction of the mine. They wanted to be sure of the location for their return next spring. It was just noon when they started down the river. They were elated at their good fortune and happy at the prospects of spending a winter in Mackay and being the envy of all their friends. That night they camped at the Middle Camas Creek near present day Kilgore, Idaho.

Bob arose before dawn as he was anxious to get on down the trail. During the night the mules had broken their pickets and wandered off into the lava. He walked quickly and quietly in the direction he felt they would have drifted. About a half hour later he could hear them eating in front of him. Talking to the mules quietly so as not to spook them, he got them roped together and started back.

Suddenly there were gunshots in front of him. Not knowing what to expect he tied the mules to a tree and crept forward to peer over a rise of lava. In the early dawn light he could see several figures walking around the camp. Then he recognized them as Indians. He watched them for several minutes. They took clothes, guns, and supplies but left the gold. The Indians then mounted and rode off to the east.

Bob sat there several minutes more, full of remorse at the loss of his close friends. He went into camp and found the two bodies. Despite his fear of the possible return of the Indians, he took time to bury them. Then he loaded the gold on the mules and left moving as fast as possible.

At Spencer he reported the Indians and replenished his supplies. He bought two guns, plenty of ammunition, and a horse. He was going to be ready if he saw any more Indians. Paying for these things in gold nuggets caused a small sensation and he told the assembled group that he had found the gold in Kilgore.

Now that he was known to be carrying gold he was nervous about potential outlaws as well as the Indian threat. He had planned to move on to Mackay using the back hills to avoid white people and the possibility of outlaws on the well traveled road. Now he changed his mind.

From Spencer he joined a freighting group who were headed for Utah. He stayed with them to Blackfoot. There he found and joined a large group of freight wagons headed west and traveled the rest of the way to Mackay in safety.

The assay tests on the gold proved to be exceedingly high in the content of gold. It brought forty thousand dollars to the ton. The actual amount of gold in the rock came to just over fifty pounds. Bob received twelve thousand dollars for his fifty pounds as gold was going for fifteen dollars an ounce at that time in the West. Under today's (April, 1991) prices the gold would have been worth a little more than three hundred thousand dollars. For how much a dollar would buy in those days compared to today you can compare the amounts the gold brought and have a good idea. He was a rich man from this one venture. He also had a lot of new friends.

Bob spent the winter exchanging mining stories and looking for two men to replace his other partners. There was no way he would work the mine alone and he wanted the company of others in case they saw the Indians again. As he watched the men around him and made his selection he was in turn being watched by those who wanted to follow him to his mine and cash in on it.

He invited two friends to join him in an expedition. They agreed. He financed the venture agreeing with each as to what the three partners would receive as a percentage of the gold they brought out of the mine. They also took enough mules to enable them to bring back plenty of ore. As soon as the snow allowed them to leave, they set out on their venture knowing first of all they had to deceive the rest of the miners in the town as there were many who wanted to follow.

Elaborate schemes had been devised by those in the town who were desirous of finding the mine. Bob had never told anyone where he had been or where the mine was located. He had hinted that the

mine was in the White Clouds mountains to the south and west of Mackay.

As spring approached the rest of the miners grew nervous and began watching Bob and his activities. They knew he would be about ready to leave when he made major supply purchases. Bob felt he could buy most of his supplies at Spencer as he knew what they had at the store there. He bought in small amounts but often so that he could built up a store to leave with.

Men began camping outside of Mackay so they would be in a position to follow Bob. Most of them were south and west of the town and so when he left traveling north many did not know of the leaving until he was long gone.

The trio spent a week wandering the Lost River Range and the Lemhi Range of mountains. When they felt they had lulled their followers into a routine of camp at night and wandering in the day, they disappeared in the middle of the night. By the time their pursuers had gotten up, the miners were miles away, and well on the path towards Island Park.

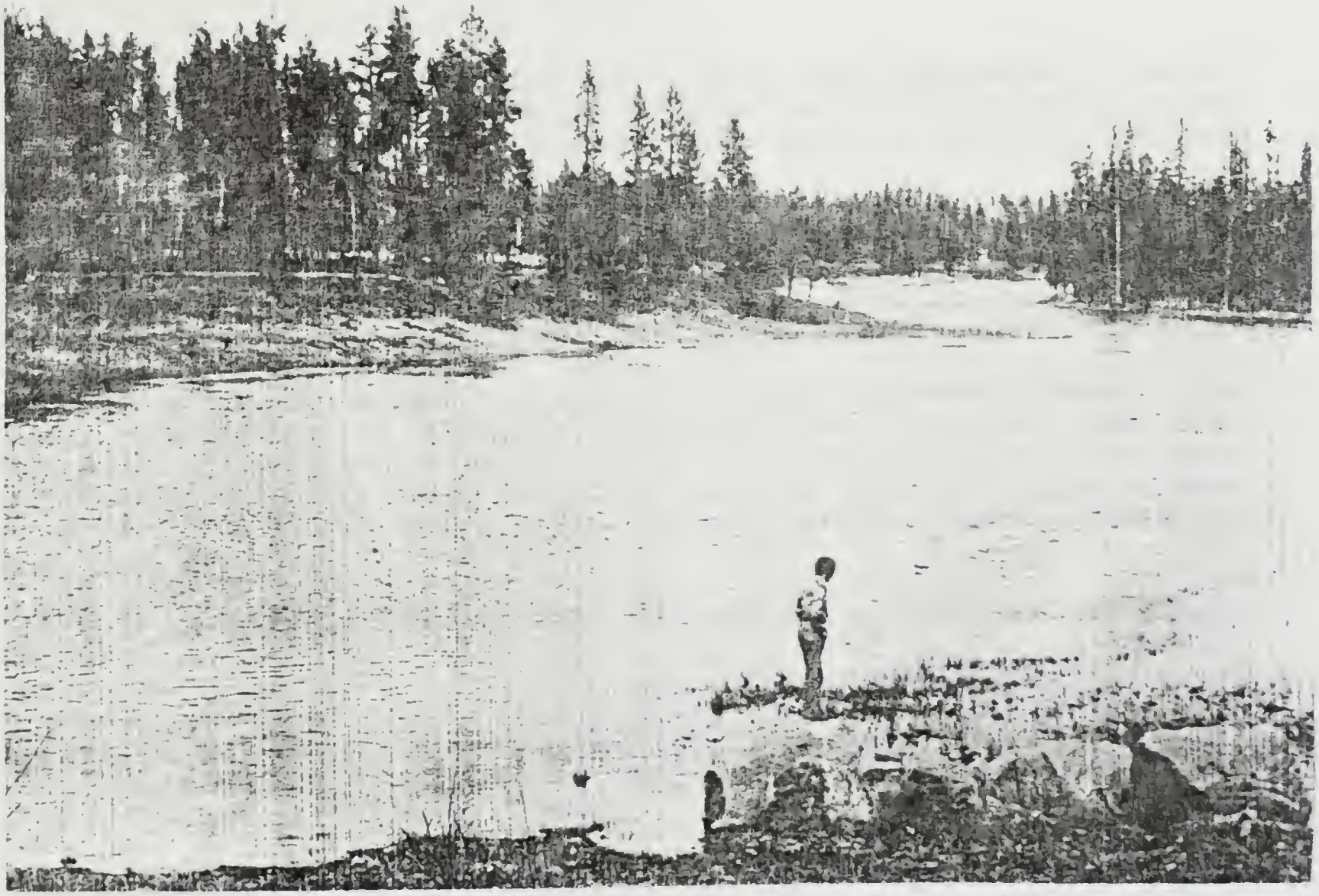
It took two more weeks for Bob to get serious about moving right to the mine. He wanted to make sure that he had lost all pursuit. While continuing their wandering they were moving steadily north and eastward.

Finally the two partners got tired of the game. They demanded to know where they were going. Bob told them to wait a little while longer and that day they went into Spencer to load up on supplies. As they packed the supplies on the mules the excitement grew as it was obvious that the owner of the store knew Bob. He wanted to know if he was going back to the mine and told him that there were several others out there looking for it although most of the first rush had returned and gone elsewhere to look for gold.

Bob spent another day east of Spencer making sure no one was following them and then set a steady course to Island Park. They went to the Buffalo River and then he led them up the river to his former camp. He got more excited as they got closer to their destination.

As they arrived at the camp it was obvious that the area had been used as a camp before and the two partners began to get excited. They were at the location of the mine where they were going to realize all their dreams. It was dusk and the hillside where the mine was located was all dark. Bob pointed that way and then they set about putting in a permanent camp.

The next morning they took shovels and picks and went up the hill to the mine. There was absolutely no sign of it left. Bob went to the ledge to show where they needed to start digging but it wasn't there. Then he laughed as he realized he was on the wrong ridge. The mine was on the next one over. He crossed over and



The Buffalo River is very short. The lost mine is within a few miles of this shot taken from the bridge looking upstream.

examined the ground looking for the ledge that contained the vein. It wasn't there.

For the next two weeks they tried every possible trail from the camp to the hill where the mine was supposed to be. There had been considerable snow that year and there was evidence in several places of a tremendous run off of snow melt. There was also evidence of high winds during the year as many trees were down that had not aged enough to be old ones.

The frustration of not finding the mine began to tell on Bob. He was beginning to remember places they had gone to during this summer as the places he felt the mine was. The description of the mine began to change in his mind. His partners stayed with him because they had committed to a summer of riches and they might find it at any time.

They spent the next weeks measuring the land into sections and examining each part in detail. They even checked areas that were completely in the opposite direction from where the mine was thought to be. They had no luck in any of their ventures. Bob was getting worse.

By the end of the summer he was irritable, irrational, and very suspicious of his partners. He accused them of hiding the

mine from him. As they probed the ground with sharpened poles to find the quartz ledge, he complained that they were not trying hard enough. His suspicion and distrust grew daily as the mine stayed hidden.

One day he pulled his gun on the two others and ordered them to pack up and leave. They had been discussing the same idea as they were sure that he had gone mad. They jumped at the chance to get away before one or both were shot in a fit of anger.

Fall storms forced Bob back to Mackay for the winter. He spent the season by himself, brooding about his bad luck and complaining. Very few spoke to him and most just avoided him altogether. His partners had come back telling the story of the lost mine and of Bob going crazy. No one wanted to associate with him that year.

In the spring he went into his elaborate plan of deception once again. However, this time no one followed him out of town or anywhere. They had dismissed him as a crazy who had lost it. This was not uncommon in the mining areas of the West. Anyone who wanted to follow would have gone directly to the Buffalo River in Eastern Idaho. The two partners had described the area where they had spent the frustrating summer.

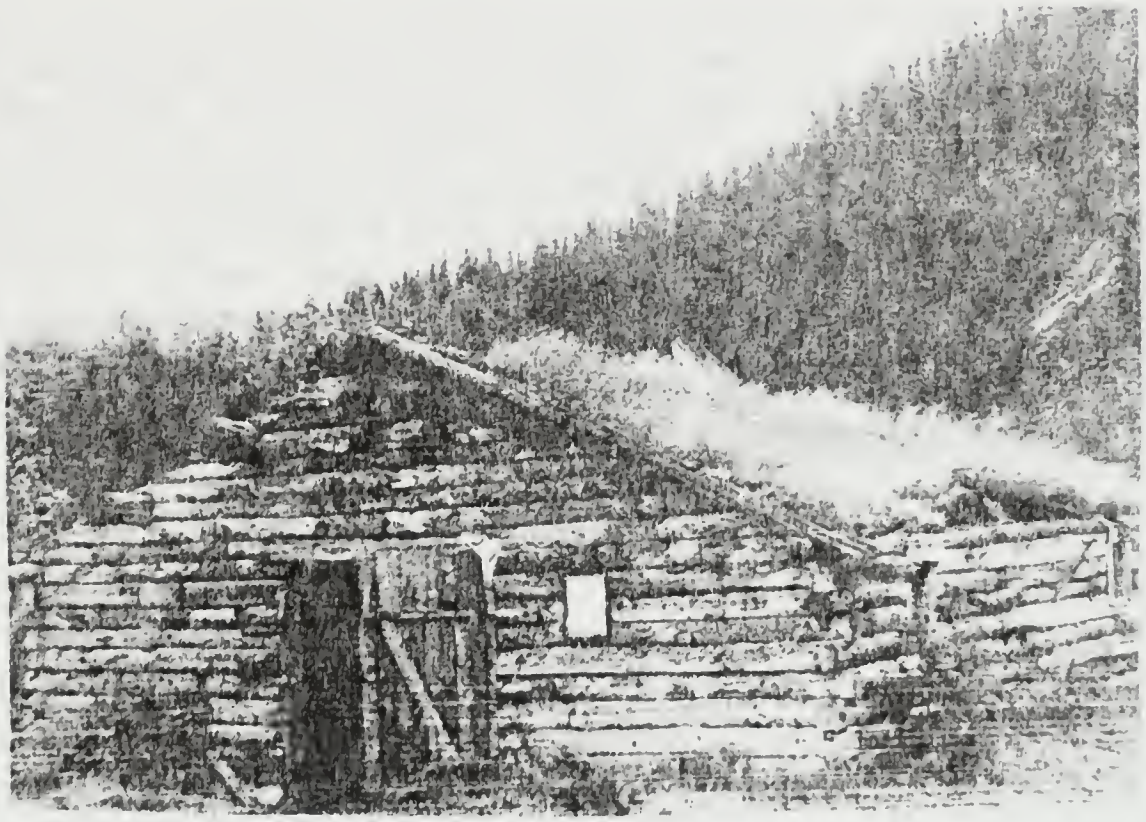
The general feeling in the mining camps was that the stress of losing his first two partners had done him in. His mental stress had caused him to lose the needed directions to the mine and the added stress of not being able to find it had caused him to snap. They wished him well in his hunt but no one wanted to go with him.

Bob went back to the Buffalo River. He spent the summer wandering and trying to find the mine. He worked on building a crude shelter and later expanded it into a cabin. He was consumed by the idea that someone would try to steal his mine from him. He worried that someone would come to the camp in his absence in the winter and find the mine. He still had money left from the first years mining and with plenty of wood around he could stay the year around.

He went to Mackay for the last time. There he bought supplies, bought trapping equipment, and took the rest of his money from the bank. Any more supplies could be purchased at Spencer. The plan now was to stay in the Island Park area all year round. He could trap, hunt, and fish to supplement his food supplies and remain near the cabin to keep all others away. His emphasis seemed to have changed from finding the mine to keeping others away from the area.

Rumor suggests that Bob eventually went all the way insane and shot himself.

Several years ago I drove the delivery truck for the Coca Cola Company in the Island Park area. I was at Pond's Lodge near the Buffalo River on a weekly basis. One day at the store I observed



Typical Miner Cabin

an old man dressed in rawhide and really looking the part of my image of a mountain man. He also smelled like a person who did not worry to much about being around people.

I was in the store every week and noticed him several times that summer. The next year I had the same assignment with the company and I noticed him again. He and I seemed to be converging on the store at the same time.

My curiosity finally got the best of me and I asked the manager of the store what the old man was doing in the country and what he thought about me asking him for an interview. The manager told me that the old man came in for supplies every so often and sold them a few skins. Everyone around thought he was slightly crazy. A few fishermen had complained that the old man had threatened them with a gun when they went by his cabin. Most thought he was harmless and knew that he spent his time looking for a gold mine.

No one knew of any mining discoveries in the area and so they all thought he was a harmless eccentric. He did suggest that it might not be wise to approach the miner as he seemed to get irritated whenever someone new talked to him. Tourists seemed to think taking his picture was showing the true west and he did not like that. He felt everyone was after his mine.

The next year I did not see him but I looked for him each time I went into the lodge. After a month I inquired about him and was told that he had died. The people at the lodge had noticed that he

had not come in for some time. They sent someone up to investigate the cabin at the head of the river and found him lying dead on his bed.

A final note on this story is a comment on the worth of this mine. The original assay was forty thousand dollars to a ton of ore. My studies of mining in the West suggests that this is relatively high for the content of gold in a ton of ore. This is probably why it created such excitement when the ore was assayed. A high yielding ore from a mine means more money for the amount of work involved. Often there is more gold in a vein if the gold is in a high yielding rock. Compare again the yield of twelve thousand dollars for fifty pounds of gold to todays yield of over three hundred thousand dollars for the same weight. It is a high yielding mine setting somewhere just off the Buffalo River near its source.

RUMORS AND SKETCHY STORIES

There are a lot of rumors that have surfaced over the years since the first gold discoveries in Northern Idaho in 1860. Many of these stories have grown over the years and many of them have lost some of the details. The stories in this section are characterized by their lack of detail or authenticity.

Some of them are rumors that have been passed down over the years and survive only because someone has told the story again and again. Attempts to find newspaper accounts or journal accounts to authenticate these stories have so far proved hopeless. I have investigated most of them and am presenting here what conclusions I have reached.

Some of the other stories seem to have a lot of supporting evidence but are lacking in any detail. These I have presented with some ideas of my own regarding the location or non-location of the lost treasure. Some of them are eliminated as serious sites for searching just on the basis of the lack of information let alone the lack of any substantiation.

A few of the other stories in this section are placed here because of the shortness of their story. The first story is of this type. I know it is true because it is one that I participated in.

Victor Spanish Coin

Wendell Gillette is the most famous historian in Teton Valley today. He is very knowledgeable regarding what happened in the Valley and who it happened to. He has spent many years living in the Victor, Idaho, area and has written histories for many years. In the past few years he has been appearing at local schools in Eastern Idaho to present them a hands on story of the early mountain men and their equipment. He was honored as an Idaho Historian by the Upper Snake River Valley Historical Society.

In the late 1970's or early 1980's I was in Victor to visit with Wendell regarding some issue of history. He was at this time the chairman of the Teton Valley Historical Society and a recently released member of the Board of Directors of the Upper Snake River Valley Historical Society.

While visiting we were interrupted by his grandson who had found a coin. He had been moving pipe on their pasture that morning and discovered the coin under a pipe. Wendell looked at the coin, cleaned it, and then handed it to me to look at. I could tell it had Spanish looking lettering and a date that was not identifiable to the naked eye.

I made a sketch of the coin and told them I would go to the library at Ricks College to see if I could find an identification in their coin books. They have several coin books. As I looked through the Spanish section of one of the books I found a coin that looked identical to my rough sketch.

I got quite excited as the coin was dated to have been in circulation during the latter 1700's and early 1800's. I made a copy of the page and then went to the phone to call Wendell.

He was waiting for the call. My excitement grew as I explained to him that this was a very valuable coin although I cannot recall how much the book said it was worth at the time. I told him to make sure that his grandson did not lose it as it was worth in the thousands in money and perhaps much more in historical value. He told me he would get the coin and then call me back so we could determine who to inform of this discovery.

When I answered the phone a few minutes later I could tell that something was wrong. His voice was not the same excited, eager sound that I had left him with a moment before. He explained that his grandson had lost the coin between grandpa's house and his own. The circumstances of the loss were not explained in detail but it left no doubt that the coin was gone and not retrievable.

The coin had been found in a field west of Victor. The most historical event to occur in this area was the battle with the Gro Ventre (Blackfeet) Indians in 1832. That summer the trappers had a rendezvous near Driggs, Idaho. One group of trappers had a major battle with the Indians that moved all over the southern end of the Valley. It is quite possible that this coin was lost in the process of this battle.

It is also possible that the coin could have been lost by one of the many trappers who traversed the Valley during the trapper era from 1820 to 1835. Then there were the Indians who came through from time to time. They had been made aware early of the use coins seemed to have with the white man and could have had some for trade.

It is most likely that the coin came from the battle. The scurry of battle, the crawling around the ground, and the quick movement from area to area would certainly have contributed to the loss of things.

Lost Mine - Shoup

Shoup, Idaho, is located in Lemhi County. This lost mine is around twenty-five miles from Shoup in the northern part of the county. This area is very mountainous and heavily wooded.

Here again we have the Spanish being mentioned. They were apparently working a mine in this wilderness area so far from Mexico. I use the word apparently because there is no historical record of such a mine being in use by the Spanish or of any Spanish incursion this far north of the colonies in New Spain. The mine was abandoned at some period for a reason not published. It could have easily been the distance from supplies or of hauling the gold. Considering the Spanish system of treating the Indians as slaves it could have easily been the threat of an Indian uprising that caused them to leave.

In 1885 two Nez Perce Indians stumbled across the abandoned Spanish mine. They brought out rich samples of high grade ore. When they found out that the ore was valuable they went back to find it again. They could not.

My credibility stretches here. Any Indian worth being called an Indian should be able to retrace his steps anywhere in the West. Course my understanding of Indian prowess is colored a lot by the descriptions in the Louis Lamour novels. None of his Indians would have ever lost a mine in the wilderness.

Sunset Lodge Coins

I read this story in a copy of Lost Treasure magazine a few years ago. I don't remember the volume number and my records of this story were one of the casualties of the Teton Flood. However, a person wanting to read this story could find the volume listed in the subject lists of magazines in the local libraries. Then if they had the back issues of the magazine you could obtain it.

I cannot recall the year the story supposedly took place. It occurred at the Sunset Lodge in Island Park. The Sunset Lodge is the last business on Highway 20 before it goes into Montana on the way to Yellowstone Park. It is just past the turn off to go to Henry's Lake.

One day a car stopped across from the lodge and service station. People got out of the car and started walking up and down the road just off the side of it. At times they seemed to be walking off a measured distance.

The curiosity of the manager of the service station was aroused and in between filling cars with gasoline he watched the people. This is why we have the story. Business was such that he

never had time to actually go over and question them as to what they were doing.

In the early afternoon he noticed one of them running to the car and getting a shovel out of it. They dug in the ground for a few moments, picked something out of the ground, and then returned to the car. They placed something in the trunk and then left. It appeared to the station manager that they were quite agitated and in a hurry at the end of the scene.

Most likely these coins were in a bag, can, or bucket.

The manager finally got a break and walked over to investigate the site of the action. He saw their footprints along the road. He also found the hole that had been dug but in their haste not filled in. In the bottom of the hole he observed the outline of coins in the mud.

That is the basis of the story. I went to Sunset Lodge to inquire about the veracity of the discovery. The owner of the service station when I visited it had owned it during the time period covered in the above story.

I questioned him about unusual or strange occurrences of the past regarding his operation of the station. I found some very interesting anecdotes of life but nothing about a lost treasure. I then told him the above story and asked him if he recalled anything like it.

He looked at me like I was crazy. He said that things were not all that glamorous in the running of a service station. If something like this story had occurred in the vicinity he would have noticed it. He suggested that if it had happened to any of

his staff they would have told him as the passing on of stories and rumors was what kept life interesting. He said he was sure that it did not happen.

I went next door to the Sunset Lodge itself. I asked any of the help if they had heard anything like this story. Two of them were long time employees and one was the manager for some time. None of them had heard anything like it. They suggested, as the station owner had, that anything of that nature would have been talked of for several weeks and would not be forgotten.

I have written this story off as one that I would not pursue. There are too many holes in it. Not only did none of the people, who in the story were very aware of it happening, recall the event but the story of the coins leaves holes. Supposedly the service station owner went over and observed the outline of coins in the mud. This would suggest that the coins were lying loose in the hole. The story suggests that a bundle, box, or keg lifted from the hole and placed in the trunk of the car.

I have tried to figure out how the outline of coins could come from the above description and can't. If the coins were in a wrap of some kind that might leave an impression it would have rotted over the years in the damp soil. If the coins were loose they would have needed to be dug out with much more care and there would have been loose soil in the bottom of the hole. A normal treasure hunter would continue to dig to make sure that all the coins had been picked up.

My best solution is that it was an interesting story but one that has been distorted over the year. It could take on a whole new meaning if a couple of words in the story were changed in the telling. The two words, Sunset Lodge. If an error was made in the naming of the lodge then it could open up the whole rest of the Island Park area.

Camas Creek

In the book, Buried Treasure of the United States there is a short item regarding a buried treasure on Camas Creek. The entire article is quoted here. "About $25,000 in gold bullion that was robbed from a stagecoach by bandits in 1864 is hidden on the banks of Camas Creek about one mile north of Camas on U.S. 51, Jefferson County."

U.S. 51 is probably meant to be U.S. 15. Camas Creek runs into Mud Lake and this story may be a confusion with the Mud Lake gold.

Mt. Sawtell Gold

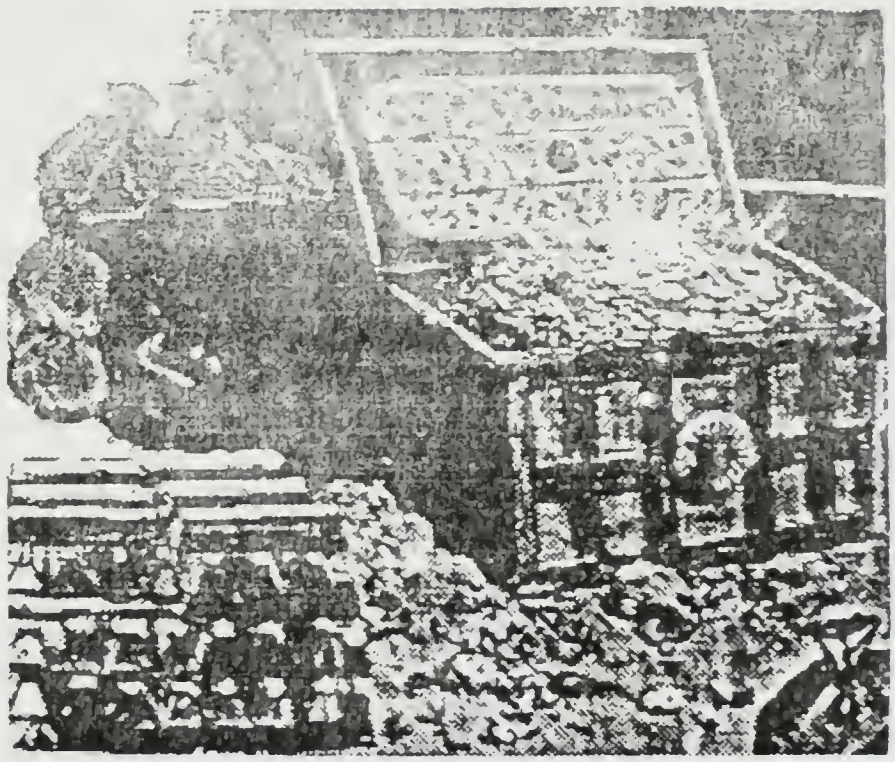
I have heard rumors and read a few published accounts of a lost treasure being hidden in a cave on Mt. Sawtell in Island Park. The published accounts all say the same thing almost like they were copied from one original story. However, none of the accounts site a journal, diary, newspaper account, or any other source so that some research could be done on the treasure.

Mt. Sawtell from across the Island Park Reservoir.

The story tells of Spanish explorers getting way off course in their travels. To get into Idaho from New Spain (Mexico) they would have to be really off course. They had with them a considerable amount of treasure. Treasure to us would have been decorated and ornate swords and other items holding precious gems. To them it was for show and defense. Added to this was the spoils of their venture into the country.

By the time they got this far into Idaho they were in a desperate state. They had been attacked by Indians and they were out of food. They found a cave on the southern slopes of Mt. Sawtell and spent a few days in it. They decided they might have a chance to get back to Mexico if they lightened their load. They discarded all they had except that which might be needed for defense and left. We have no record of them ever getting back to Mexico or returning.

Suggestions have been made that this was one of the groups sent out by Coronado from his main group in 1540-42. Coronado did send out many groups from his exploring body to see if they could find the seven cities of gold. However, the journal



Sawtell Treasure?

stories of this group accounted for all who went out and none suggested that any got as far north as Idaho.

There were other Spanish explorers who went about the West and a couple of their fur traders were in Utah and southern Idaho. But to suggest that a group carrying treasure got as far north as Idaho is to stretch credibility.

Another fact to support the idea that the treasure does not exist is the knowledge that Mt. Sawtell is a prime elk hunting area in the fall of each year. During the past fifty years there has been intense hunting all over this mountain. It is hard to believe that the numbers of hunters involved in this area would not have stumbled upon a cave or if finding a cave did not explore it.

Leadore, Idaho

The Gilmore and Hahn mining areas were known for producing nickel, lead, some silver, and a little gold. These two towns are on the road to Salmon, Idaho, and a few miles southeast of Leadore. There was a small smelter at Hahn. It is thought that workers from the Hahn smelter stole small amounts of gold and hid it near the smelter to pick up at a later date. In 1936 there is a report that fifty pounds of gold were found a couple of hundred yards from the old smelter. It had been buried in a hole two feet deep. Fifty pounds of gold under 1991 prices would result in about three hundred thousand dollars. It is not known how many more caches might be located near the smelter.

West Jefferson Coins

I was at a meeting to help organize the Mud Lake Historical Society when the subject of lost treasure came up. One of the people in the meeting suggested that he had heard of gold coins being lost along a road which was a former trail between Reno Point to the west and Hamer to the east.

The coins were stolen from Challis. The outlaws had them in bags upon horses and were making their escape across this trail through the desert. There is a lot of lava in the desert and it is thought that one of the bags scraped a lava escarpment and broke open or at least tore a hole. A open break might have been heard and discovered as the noise of several coins descending onto the lava should have been loud. A hole in the bag would allow a coin to fall out every so often along the trail. It would not be noticed until the group stopped for a rest or to check their burdens. By this time it would be too hard to go back and check or pick up any loose coins.

The road through this part of Jefferson County has been built up by the County and follows the same route as the old trail. At Hamer the road joins the controversial road that crosses just south of the Juniper Hills to Egin. The part of the road where the coins are supposed to be is located north of Mud Lake.

The story suggests that some of the coins were found by men working on the upgrading of the road. There was a County Commissioner from Jefferson County in the meeting who heard this story. He did not refute or admit his knowledge of the coins being found or existing. This is a story I am going to look more into as soon as I obtain a metal detector.

Craters of the Moon National Monument

I read an account of gold from robberies being hid in a cave in the crater in the "Moon National Monument" located in Blaine and Butte counties. The robberies occurred between 1867 and 1895 by several different outlaws. There were no details regarding the amounts of gold stolen. I am not sure which crater is being referred to above as there are many small blow holes and many caves on the National Monument. I do not know the law regarding the removal of something from the Monument but I suggest that it probably is the same as the National Parks. Nothing is to be removed from the Parks.

A second story suggests "there is a large cache of gold bullion alleged to be concealed among some large brick volcanic rocks about one mile east of State Highway 93A on the northwestern edge of the park."

Snake River - Hibbard

When the dam was being built on Willow Creek to form the Ririe Reservoir a lot of the fill was hauled from the Hibbard, Idaho, area to the dam. There was heavy equipment on the side of the Snake River low lands to sort the sand, gravel, and soil to make sure what was going into the dam was what the engineers wanted.

This is the site where the gravel was being hauled from in Hibbard.

There were news stories of small piles of gold dust being found under the conveyor belts and under the gravel sorter. Apparently the gold was contained in the soil that was being used for the dam. The circular motion of the crusher acted like a gold pan and the gold settled under the machine. There was not enough for anyone to retire from but it was there.

Arco Gold

In a sort of recent gold robbery it is reported that outlaws took $215,000 (April, 1991, three million, eight hundred thousand dollars) in 1897. It was taken from a pack train that was going from Blackfoot to Arco. They hid the gold in a cave about two miles northeast of Arco. They were caught and hanged.

The probability of a pack train loaded with gold going from Blackfoot to Arco would be similar to a bulk gasoline truck hauling gasoline from the service station to the refinery. It doesn't make sense. The mines were on the other side of Arco and the gold went from Arco to Blackfoot for shipment on to the railroad in Utah.

This gravel pit is located east of Rexburg. It was used for years by the Madison County. It is now on private property. It has never yeilded any gold but considering the prior story, could.

Sam, Idaho, is located in the mountains on the west side of Teton Valley in the center of this picture. It was the site of coal deposits that were mined commercially for a time.

Uranium - Heise

During the late 1950's and early 1960's there was a uranium rush in Eastern Idaho. Low yielding uranium ore was found in several areas and at the time throughout the country there was a need for uranium ore to use in reactors and atomic bombs.

Prospectors found the ore in the Salmon area and immediately there was a rush of people to the country to lay out claims. Most of them then sat back and waited for a big company to come in and buy the claim from them. That did not happen. To keep a claim a person has to put so much money into improving it. Some of those prospectors went to their claim only once or twice a year on a week-end to put in some work so they could keep their claim. The work consisted of improving the road or the entrance to where their mine would be. I am not aware of anyone making any money on any of these claims.

At the same time the claims were being laid out in Salmon someone found readings on their geiger counter in the Heise area of Eastern Idaho. The readings were low but the anticipation was great. Within a two week period you could drive along the road going to the Heise Hot Springs and on to Kelley's Canyon and see mining claims posted every so many yards.

I had a small geiger counter and walked across some of these claims to see what had triggered the massive response. I found very weak readings wherever I went. It was more like a claim was filed and then a whole bunch of people claimed next to the original and then spread out. Without knowing where the best source was they claimed the whole river valley.

I saw some improvement on one of the claims over the next couple of years. One claim was located between the Heise bridge and the first house to the east. The people had improved their claim by building a wood mine entrance on the north side of the road. I walked up to this mine to see what was there. There was a mine entrance and a solid rock wall. The entrance had been built to satisfy the requirements of the claim but had progressed no more.

I have never read in the newspaper or heard of anyone selling their claim in this area to a mining company. By now all the claims would have expired as there has been no work on any of them. The uranium proved to be of such low yield that it would not have been profitable to work a mining program to extract it. Much better sources have been found with better yielding ore.

Today, to open a mining program on that type of scale would require an environmental impact statement. With the desire to preserve the beauty and wilderness aspect of the South Fork of the Snake River it is unlikely that one would be approved at least without a lengthy delay.

The Idaho sand dunes have been a source of Indian artifacts for years. They have also been the possible cause of treasures remaining lost. The shifting sands have covered more than one lost treasure.

Kilgore Gold

This is one of the most confused stories I have ever read. There are so many holes in it that I am not sure where to start. I will tell the story as I read it and then point out a few of the problems I find with it as it was written.

The story suggests that renegade Indians stole two million dollars (thirty-six million, April, 1991) worth of gold bullion and buried it near Kilgore, Idaho. The description of the burial site is that it was "...on the north shore of Buffalo Creek, about eight miles southeast of Kilgore, Fremont County, in the northwestern corner of the Targhee Forest..."

The account goes on to suggest the robbery took place in 1880. Within two hours of the robbery the Indians had been caught and killed by the Cavalry. By the time the army caught up with them the Indians had hidden the two wagon loads of gold although the wagons and horses were found.

There are a few things that don't jive in this short story. There is no Buffalo Creek eight miles southeast of Kilgore. There is a Buffalo River about thirty miles due east of Kilgore. It has always been known as the Buffalo River. The only Indians we know of in this part of Idaho any where near the reported time of the robbery were the Nez Perce of Chief Joseph who came by Kilgore into

Island Park in 1877. This trip is well documented and there were no wagons of gold around.

There have been a couple of books written about the history of Island Park that do not mention any gold wagons being taken over by renegade or otherwise Indians. I can find no reference to in the history of the region as to this route being used by any mining areas as a transportation route.

The only real trail through the area was the one used by travelers to Yellowstone Park who would take the train to Spencer and then take wagons eastward by Kilgore, into Island Park, and then on into the Yellowstone Park. There just are no mines in the vicinity that would have bars of gold to get them into this area at that time period.

There are just too many holes in this one to give it too much validity.

Sentinel Rocks

Here is a quote from the book, <u>Buried Treasure of the United States</u>. Compare this to the story printed prior to this page in the second section of the book.

"In 1869 bandits robbed and buried about 300 pounds of raw gold beneath Sentinel Rocks near the junction of Big and Kelly Canyons, near Kelly's Gulch, a few miles north of Rigby, Booneville County."

I believe this is a reference to the Kelley's Canyon gold written about in some detail in a previous chapter. There are a couple of errors listed in this brief quote. In all the research I have done on this story there has never been an accurate fact of how much the gold weighed. I cannot even confirm as to whether it is gold bars or sacks of gold dust.

It says Kelly's Canyon is a few miles north of Rigby. Of course it is located several miles to the east of Rigby. North of Rigby is the Snake River Plain of desert with nothing resembling a canyon or mountains.

The final error could be typographical. It suggests that Kelley's Canyon is in Booneville County. If the authors are consulting any maps of the area in their story telling they would know that it is Bonneville County.

Snake River

Here we are with the Plummer Gang again. They seem to have been the most active of all the gangs in the West. This time they are in the area of American Falls.

With a loot of five hundred thousand dollars (April, 1991 nine million dollars) they found themselves on the Snake River just below the present day American Falls Reservoir. The story suggests that they placed the loot in a cave behind a waterfall about two miles below the dam in Power County.

It seems that this treasure should be one that could be found. There are not very many waterfalls below the American Falls Dam and with the approximate two mile limit a person should be able to look behind any of them if access can be gotten to the river. It does pass through a steep canyon at this point.

Portneuf Canyon Coins

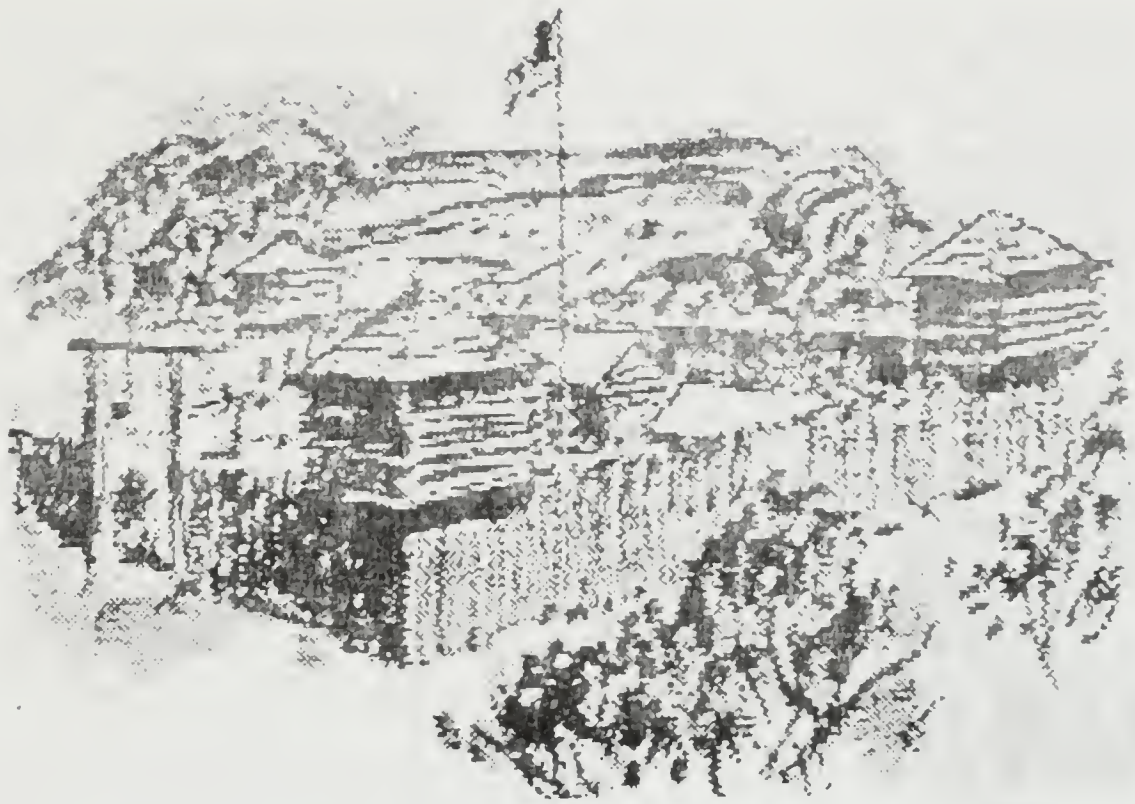
Here is another quote from the book, Buried Treasure of the United States. "Bandits are alleged to have buried about $110,000 in gold coins and bullion in the vicinity of Portneuf Canyon, a few miles south of Pocatello, U.S. 15, Bannock County." The above amount comes to almost two million dollars today (April, 1991.) The only downer on this story is the lack of significant details. The Portneuf Canyon is quite large and without anything to pin the site of the lost treasure down any closer it would be almost impossible to find.

Fort Hall

Fort Hall was an historic fort built in 1834 as a trading post for fur trappers. It was used by the Hudson Bay Company (British) fur trappers for a time and later was used as a military fort. When the mines of Montana started producing their gold it became an important trading spot. It was abandoned for the more popular site of Blackfoot a few miles to the north and east as it was a junction of two trails out of the mining areas.

The site of the old fort is now on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation southwest of Blackfoot and north of Pocatello, Idaho. Since it is in the bottom land of the Snake River it is covered by the waters of the American Falls Reservoir until the water is drawn down in the fall.

It was the junction point for the Oregon and California Trails. Travelers to these two points came on the Oregon Trail to the fort and then separated shortly after to go to their separate destinations.



This is how I pictured Fort Hall in its heyday

The Snake River floods almost every spring. The mountains of Eastern Idaho and western Wyoming harbor enormous snow depth. When spring comes to this desert country it comes quickly. In the early days there was nothing to stop the water and it often flooded the low lands along the river. At times it rose and spread out across large acreage of land.

In 1863 following a week of warm weather one of the stronger snow melts resulted in a flood that destroyed the fort and the support buildings surrounding the fort. A large safe in the fort was lost along with all of the contents of the other buildings. It is reported to have contained several hundred pounds of gold.

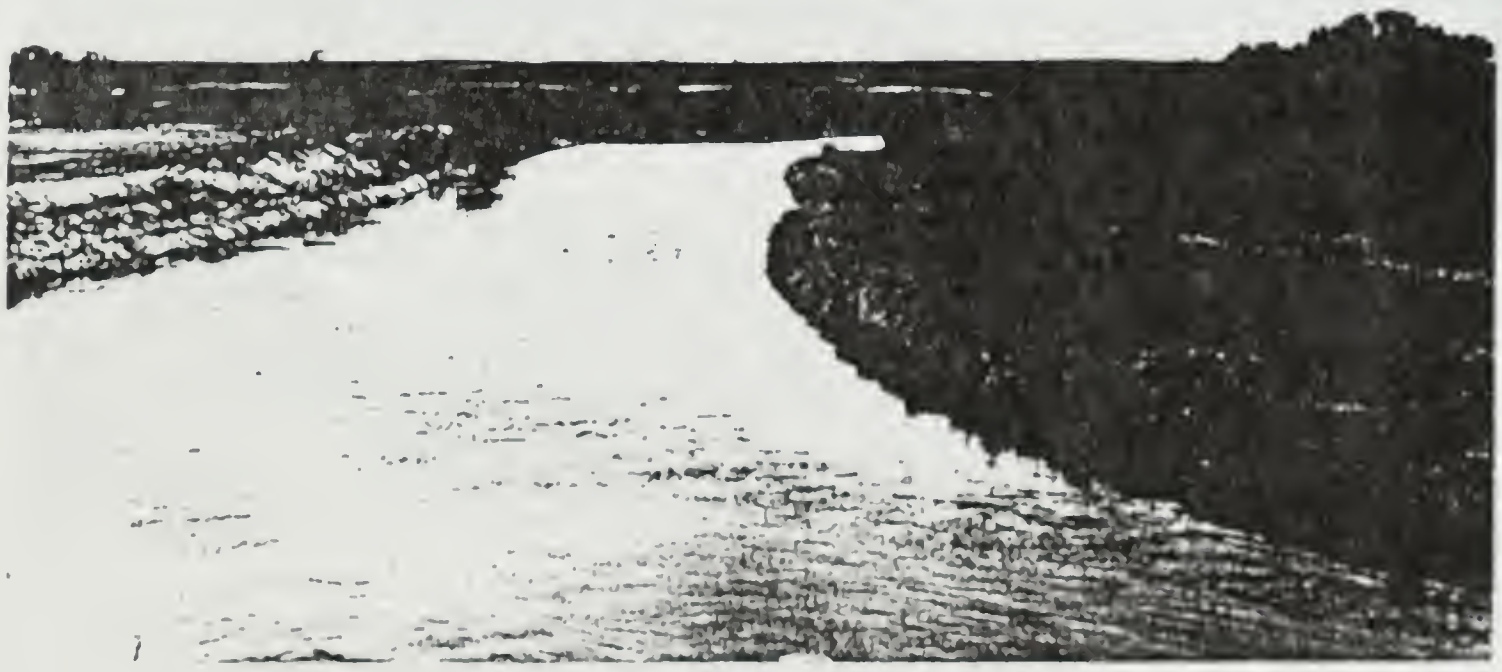
I don't know what several amounts to but at around three hundred sixty dollars per ounce it makes a hefty treasure. Considering the site of the fort and the river nearby there are three things that I would evaluate before I made a serious attempt to find this treasure.

One, it is on the Indian Reservation and permission would have to be obtained before wandering about. The Indians have the right to know what is going on in their territory. Sometimes they have been known to charge for fishing or hunting on the reservation. I don't know about treasure hunting but I would bet they would want a cut of anything found.

Two, how far downstream would the flood waters have carried the safe before it reached a place of haven? Several hundred pounds of gold and the dead weight of the safe would suggest not to far. Remember the site of the fort is under the water of the American Falls Reservoir for most of the year. The safe would be further down from the fort.

Three, if one were to consider using a metal detector you would have to remember that the American Falls Reservoir was the last receptacle of the debris of the Teton Flood. Anything metal that had any air in it would have floated from the dam all the way to the reservoir and become part of a submerged junk pile. When the water is low there are metal items jutting up from the reservoir floor all over.

Teton River, looking south, as it is near to leaving the Valley.

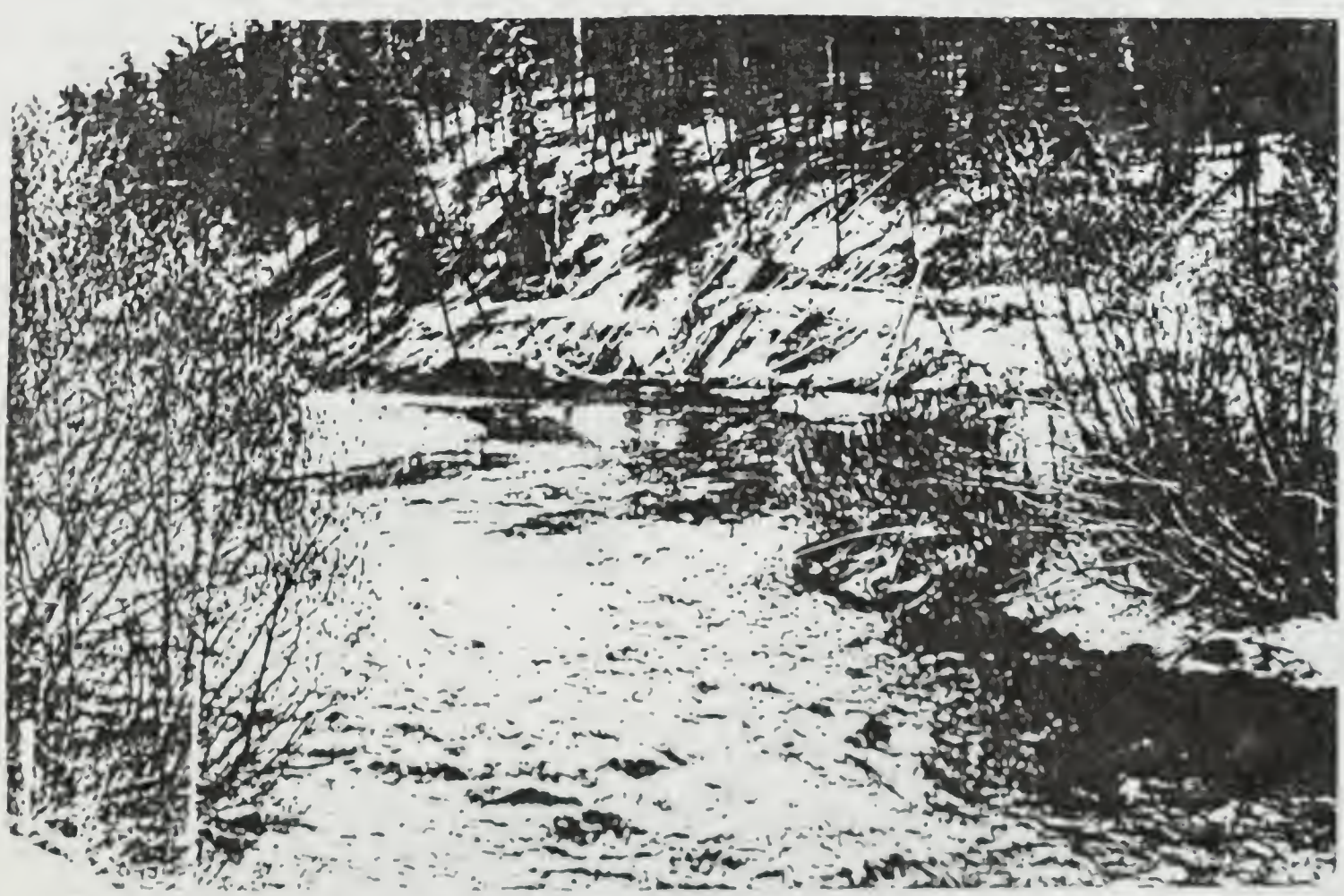


South Fork of Teton River as seen from the Moody Road.

North Fork of Teton River from Salem Road. Sand bar in middle of river has yeilded gold flakes.

Falls River looking northeast from Highway 32 bridge. This river comes out of Yellowstone Park and has been relatively free flowing to this point.

Falls River near the bridge on Highway 20. I found gold flakes on a sand bar on the right side of the stream near the riffle in the middle of the picture.



Robison Creek near where it enters Warm River. The upper reaches of this creek have yeilded several pans of gravel containing two and three flakes per pan.

The North Fork (Henry's) of the Snake River comes out of this canyon where Warm River in the foreground joins it. There is new gold to be found on this stretch as some is coming into the river between here and Island Park Reservoir.

North Fork of Snake River in Salem. There are some great sand bars between this Salem bridge and the Hibbard bridge.

South Fork of the Snake River above Heise. There are some great gravel bars on this stretch of river.

South Fork of Snake River looking upstream. Just around the corner is a canyon noted for flour gold. This is gold that is too light to pan. It has to be collected by using mercury.

Falls River looking downstream from the Highway 20 bridge. This river runs through this lava gorge at a rapid pace. There is more yeild in flakes of gold below this stretch than above it. I have often wondered if there is a vein of gold in the lava under the water level. It is too swift for me to investigate.

A reminder to those of you who have stories of lost treasure in Eastern Idaho besides those mentioned in this book, I would like to get them all in print. We will put them in an upcoming issue of the Snake River Echoes or if enough more come in they will be put in a companion volume to this one. Good Luck in your searching.

The following map shows the approximate site of the major gold stories mentioned in the book. Consult a road map for specific details.

This view is of the North Fork of the Snake River as it leaves the Island Park Caldera and enters the Snake River Plain. The river was quite free flowing to here until the Island Park Dam was built.

This view of the South Fork of the Snake River was taken upstream from Heise. It shows some of the sand bars and gravel deposits in which gold has been known to be deposited.